

THE LONDON READER

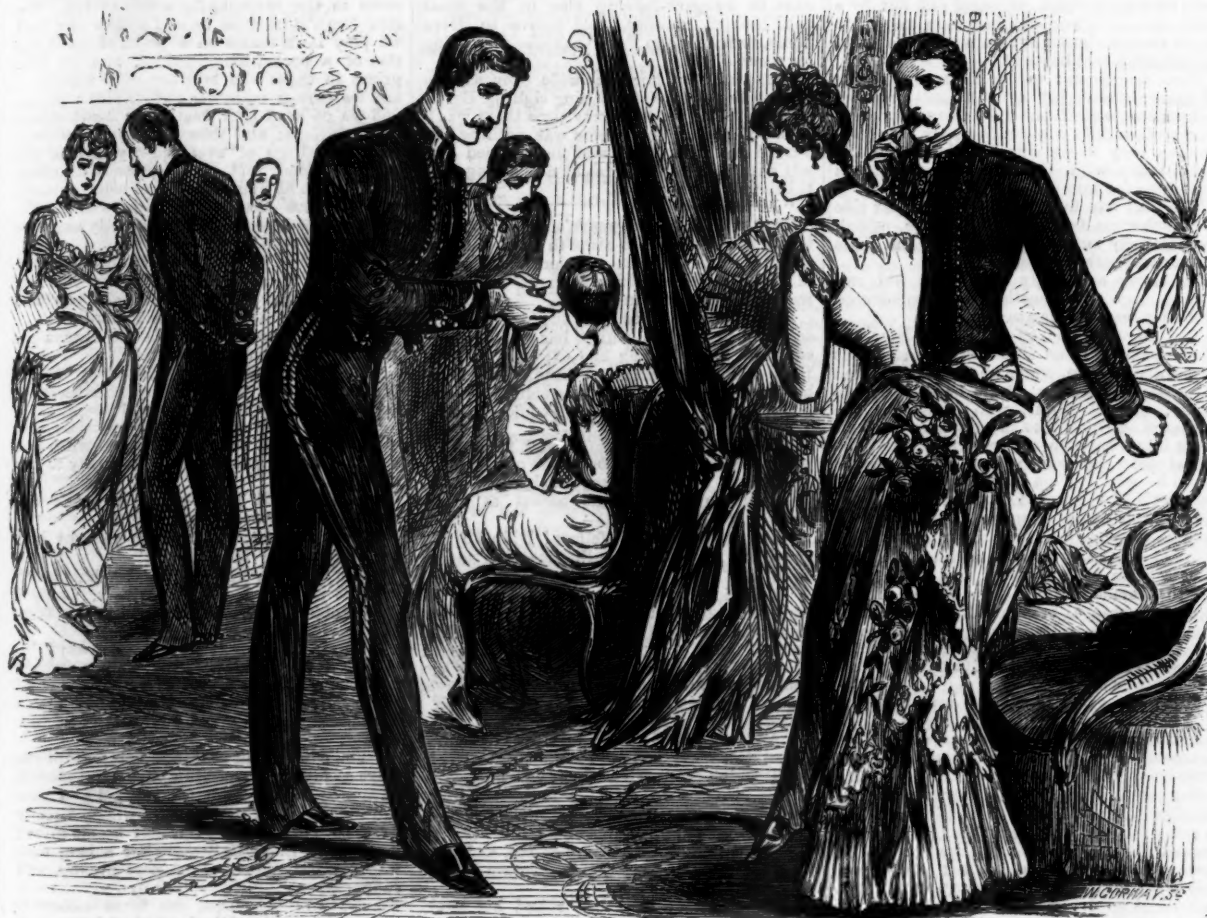
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No. 1208.—VOL. XLVII.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING JUNE 26, 1886.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



["THIS ISN'T FAIR!" EXCLAIMED VYVYAN, WRATHFULLY.]

A SECRET SIN.

—30—

CHAPTER VII.

THERE was no happier girl than Pera Clifford on the day she started for Warburton Hall, full of the bright hopes of youth untarnished by sad experience. She flitted about the old Gatehouse, her eyes sparkling with anticipated enjoyment, her light tread going tap-tap on the polished oak floor, her laugh echoing joyously through the panelled rooms.

Sir Roger was to be left alone—that was the only cloud on her sunshine—for Bernard Vansittart had positively refused to come at his cousin's bidding. As she was going away he said that he knew he should not be needed, Sir Roger always preferring his own company to that of anyone else.

Pera was indignant when she read the letter which followed her to the Hall.

"Just as if she were likely to want him," she said, with a toss of her head. "And just as if papa were a boor or a savage. I'll

never ask him again, that I won't, not if he's dying for it!"

"Men don't die of that sort of thing," said Lady Hargreave, quietly. "They take a delight in living as long as they can, and always turning up when they are not wanted. If Bernard shows his long nose here, I know somebody who will put it out of joint."

"It would be rather fun," said, Pera, meditatively, planning all sorts of mischief as her eyes twinkled under their long lashes.

"My dear, such fun is dangerous. Bernard always looks like a mine ready to explode. I'm wondering if I'll ask Val to luncheon, but I think I had better not. He had better see you for the first time at the ball, when you shall blaze upon him like a comet in your full splendour."

"Who is Val?" with an amused smile at hearing her small self described as a comet.

"He is a sort of connection of mine, the maddest, merriest, most charming fellow you ever knew; you will lose your heart to him as a matter of course. All the girls do."

"Indeed I shan't. I'm not such a little fool as to be taken with every good-looking

face I come across," her own face flushing as she thought of Vyvyan.

"You might fall in love with him, and not be a fool after all," said Lady Hargreave, slowly, as a softer light came into her eyes, a gentler tone into her voice.

Married at seventeen to a dry fossil of a husband whom it was impossible to regard with anything warmer than respect, was it a wonder that her young heart was soon filled with another image, and that only the marriage vow and her hopes of heaven kept her pure and unspotted by Sir Denzil Hargreave's side?

Sidney Valentine told his love under the cedars at Warburton, and in the bright summer-time they parted, with white faces, and panting breath, and a hand-clasp like a grip of iron.

She had not forgotten it yet, though she was a middle-aged widow, and he was dead, and Val, the irrepressible lancer, was his son by the red-haired girl whom he afterwards married. Ah how fresh the old times seemed every now and then when there was a pause in the rush of life! And how mad

the longing to call back youth and time and opportunity, and begin again with all the chances fresh, and hands unfettered!

But sentiment is out of place when the wrinkles have come, and Lady Hargreave, with a sigh, roused herself from her reverie, and said they must go at once and get ready for their drive, or else the horses would be kept waiting, and Grove, the coachman, would be cross. Not that she cared much if both horses stood on their hind legs as if anxious to gnaw the sky, or Grove looked like a suppressed thunderstorm. Her time for caring much, or being put out by a trifle, was over, and she had been known to laugh when a shower of rain was in the act of destroying a best bonnet!

Pera, accustomed to her father's long fits of silence, found her aunt a most amusing companion, and fancied she was gathering stores of worldly wisdom from her conversation, as they drove side by side down the leafy lanes, with the pleasant woodlands stretching far into the distance.

The Hall was five miles on the further side of Warburton from the Gatehouse, which was scarcely sufficient reason for the little intercourse between them.

Sir Roger and Lady Hargreave did not get on very well together, and considered that they were better apart.

The Baronet had offended his sister beyond recall by some slighting remark about Captain Valentine, whom he unjustly accused of always dangling after other people's wives; and his sister, who could be hot-tempered at times like most of her sex, had flown into a passion and retorted, that if he looked after his own wife a little better it would be well for his own name, as well as for the child who would come after him.

Sir Roger never forgave that speech; it rankled through all the bitter years that followed. He felt it acutely, because, perhaps, after a time, he recognised the truth of it, and that made it sting all the more. Therefore there was a breach between the two houses—and Lady Hargreave never came to the Gatehouse except at very long intervals, and Sir Roger never to the Hall from year's end to year's end.

Pera's letter had touched a certain spring of kindness in her aunt's heart. She remembered her own youth, and determined to stretch out her hand to save her niece from being buried alive.

Her own happiness would never have been sacrificed if she had had some kind relation to think for her, and warn her of the consequences; so she resolved to save Pera whilst there was yet time, whilst her youth was still fresh and her young heart untouched, and whilst no dry fossil in the shape of an elderly eligible had appeared to put in his claim, and take in Sir Roger.

As soon as she returned from her expedition to the Gatehouse she set to work to make inquiries about Mr. Vyvyan, who seemed likely to be rather an obstacle to her plans. She learnt, in the first place, that he was not rich, in the second that he was very generous, in the third that he was supposed to have no expectations, as he never mentioned them. He was of good birth, but not heir to a coronet like Val, who would one day blossom into a viscount if an uncle obligingly died without going in for matrimony.

No prudent relation could call this young subaltern anything but "detrimental," so that he must be gently induced to stand on one side, and let an eligible take his place. The thing could be managed, she was sure, and she should have the happiness of seeing Pera the wife of Sidney Valentine's son, and Val would be bound to her by another tie, and gladden her old age (when it came) with all the affection of a nephew and a dear old friend.

"We won't go into Warburton to-day, as it is so hot; but I must show you soon the three beautiful churches which are its pride, and a bit of tapestry in the old Hall, which is said

to be mentioned in Markham's history. Won't that give it an attraction in your eyes?" with a mischievous smile.

"Oh, certainly; I'm longing to see it. I don't think it is so very hot!" rejoined her niece, insinuatingly, who had reasons of her own—not at all connected with a dusty piece of tapestry—for wishing to visit Warburton.

Her aunt saw through her, of course, and knew that the cavalry barracks would be far more interesting to her in her present mood than the finest church in the world; but after calling on one or two friends in large domains shut in by park-fencing, she, in the most hard-hearted manner, told Grove to drive home, remarking to Pera that she was dying for a cup of tea.

Pera had kept her eyes wide open all the way on the chance of catching sight of Bertie Vyvyan riding by, but every time there was a sound of horses' hoofs there was nothing but a fresh disappointment, and she resigned herself with a sigh to the idea of not seeing him till the night of the ball.

"Anyone called?"

That was Lady Hargreave's usual question to her butler when she came in from a drive, and the answer on this occasion was a string of names, and a murmur about somebody waiting in the drawing-room.

Lady Hargreave entered the room with a smile upon her lips, whilst her eyes went in search of the one being she expected to find. Pera following quietly behind, her heart beating fast as she asked herself if it were possible that "the somebody" could be Bertie Vyvyan.

The next moment she caught sight of a yellow head appearing above one of the large armchairs, and her aunt exclaimed, in a voice where reproach was meant to blend graciously with affection,—

"Val, you impudent fellow! Didn't I tell you I was not at home till after the seventeenth?"

"You did," as Val raised himself up till he seemed about to touch the ceiling with his head, and taking his old friend's hand in his, shook it heartily. All every ring she possessed ran into the neighbouring finger, "and as the house was empty, and I couldn't be in anyone's way, I wouldn't chance a sunstroke any longer, but came in here out of the sun."

"And you didn't guess that I was at home, and didn't want you?" looking up into his good-looking face with a bright smile.

"No," very gravely. "How could I? Such a thing never happened to me before. But turn me out; I'm movable!"

"Not till you've had a cup of tea, and I've introduced you to my niece—Captain Valentine, Miss Clifford."

He bowed very low, then raised his head, and his bold blue eyes at the same time.

"Miss Clifford," he said, in a tone of reproach, "why have I never met you before?"

"For the same reason as you never saw my last new bonnet," interposed Lady Hargreave, "because they have both been in a bandbox. You are too provoking, for I didn't mean you to raise the lid just yet."

"Life is too short to lose such a golden opportunity. Shall I pour out the tea?"

"No, sir; my niece will do that for us."

"Then I will sink into the footman, and hand the cups," following Pera immediately to the tea-table.

CHAPTER VIII.

TRIMITY was certainly not Captain Valentine's prevailing weakness, as Pera soon found out; and if golden opportunities often came in his way he was not likely to lose them from want of pluck. He sat in a low chair, between the pretty little tea-table and Lady Hargreave's arm-chair, dividing his attentions between the lovely niece and the still attractive aunt in a way that amused them both.

"I wish you would bring Miss Clifford into Warburton to-morrow! The churches ought

to be looked at. St. Mark's is a regular Jumbo in its way."

"Do you mean there's a craze about it," inquired Lady Hargreave, sipping her tea.

"No. It carries such a crowd of people."

"Carries such a crowd! How you talk! I don't think it's reverent to liken a church to an elephant."

"Then I'll throw over the elephant, and stick to the church. Come and see it, Miss Clifford; you really ought to," throwing a depth of entreaty into his voice. "At least start for it, change your mind on the way, and come to the barracks for a cup of tea. We give five o'clock teas now, I assure you, and we play lawn-tennis on a patch of grass the size of a pocket-handkerchief, and we give prizes to those who talk the most nonsense; and we enrage mamma and frighten papa, and we go head over heels into heart-breaking flirtations; and then, when we've worked on the feelings of every pretty girl in the neighbourhood, and had a present of every heart worth having, the colonel behaves like a man of sense—declares we've got our marching orders, and we ride away gently amongst a chorus of sobs."

"The girls of Warburton must be a peculiar race," said Pera, her colour rising like her anger in defence of her sex, "or else you have a vivid imagination, Captain Valentine."

"Fact, I assure you. We are always regretted more than anyone else."

"I only wish you would 'ride away' whilst I am here, and I'd wave my handkerchief, and wish you joy with a shout of laughter."

"Hysterical, of course," gravely pulling his moustaches. "I can only hope that when you know us better you won't be so ready to get rid of us."

"At least I'll promise not to break my heart, like the rest."

He sat upright, and looked straight into her pretty, eager face.

"You've made up your mind to hate us?"

"Not at all," blushing divinely, "only I should object to be classed amongst the Warburton victims."

"Would you have it all your own way?"

"No, I couldn't," she said, with a certain modesty which delighted him much, for all the girls whom he had met lately had double her assurance, and not one quarter of her beauty.

"You can't mean that. It is only that you drive so fast in your triumphal car that you have no time to count the victims you have run over. Now, I'm so cock-a-whoop directly I feel sure of one that I'm half beside myself with joy. Lady Hargreave for a long time was my only hope. She kept me up, and supported my fainting spirits, fed my starving vanity, and prevented me from collapsing through timidity. Won't you be kind enough to give her a helping hand?" letting his eyes dwell in an embarrassing manner on the face he admired so much.

"I don't think it will be needed," with a smile. "I had better reserve myself for some one who has no Lady Hargreave."

"As I have the honour to be your first friend in the regiment," drawing himself up rather stiffly, "I thought I had a right."

"Don't you be too sure," broke in Lady Hargreave, mischievously. "You are not by any means Pera's first friend. Someone else has had the start of you."

"The scoundrel's name?" in pretended wrath.

"Shall we tell him, Pera?" looking round at her niece, who was bending very low over the tea-pot, as if she wanted to see her own reflection in the silver lid.

Fearing lest Captain Valentine might find out for himself that Vyvyan was the one, and imagine all sorts of things about him, she raised her head boldly, and said clearly and distinctly, with an affectation of indifference,—

"Mr. Vyvyan happens to be an old friend, that is all."

"And isn't that quite enough? Did he

know you in your cradle? Did you make daisy-chains together? Did he play round the mulberry bush with you?" very eagerly.

"No, no!" laughing. "I met him last year."

"Last year? Is that all?" with a huge sigh of relief. "Then I'll distance him yet. Miss Clifford, have you promised him the first dance for the seventeenth?"

"No," feeling vexed at having to confess it. "It would have been absurd to talk about it when I saw him last."

"Then you haven't seen him since you've been at the Hall?"

"No. He doesn't know my aunt."

"And you couldn't get over her to ask him?"

"I didn't try," loftily.

"Of course not; but he might. I should have managed it somehow. I should have bought a locket, and pretended I had picked it up just outside the gate. That would have given me an excuse for coming in; and once in, I would have defied anyone to turn me out without giving me an invitation to come back."

"You have always had great faith in your own attractions," said Lady Hargreave, with an indulgent smile, much as she might have given to a spoilt child.

"Faith in my friends," with a bow, which seemed to imply how much he owed to this particular one. "Do you know, Miss Clifford, if I am spoilt, Lady Hargreave has it all to answer for. She never settled at the Hall till she heard that my regiment had come to Warburton, and she never means to leave it till we get our route."

"Perhaps the first was a coincidence and the second is only an hypothesis," said Pera, gravely, with a smile about the corners of her mouth.

Captain Valentine raised his hands in horror. "You crush me with your long words, and I haven't a dictionary handy. It seems to me that, as regards Vyvyan, I am master of the situation. I am here, and he isn't."

"How could he be?" said Pera, her cheeks flushing with vexation; "when I tell you that he doesn't know my aunt, and he hasn't an idea that I am here."

"Whew! I think I should have found it out myself, but I'll be the last to grumble at him. Perhaps under these circumstances you would honour me by giving me that first dance I talked of?"

Pera hesitated, whilst her aunt watched her with some amusement, thinking to herself,—

"Who could resist Val?"

The poor girl was in a difficulty; for how could she reserve a dance for a man who had not asked for it? Would it not be as bad as owning that she counted him as a lover, and was ready to acknowledge him as such before he had spoken the decisive words.

"Have I been too bold?" asked Valentine, softly. "If Vyvyan has a better right—"

"No, no!" hurriedly, "he has no right at all."

"Then the dance may be mine?"

"With pleasure;" bowing slightly, and with an absence of all pleasure from her voice.

A gleam of triumph shot from Captain Valentine's blue eyes. He was conscious that he had already made a long step on the road to victory, and he was beginning to think that nothing could be so interesting as to make this little girl—with a fine contempt for him and his brother-officers—lose her heart to one of them, and lower her colours in all submission.

As if to play into his hands, Lady Hargreave looked up presently and remarked,—

"I want some roses for that china-bowl, and I don't know how to get them. I am too tired myself."

"Let me go, auntie?" and Pera got up eagerly, feeling as if she would be glad to escape from Captain Valentine's saucy eyes for a few minutes.

"There's a dear girl!" exclaimed her

aunt. "I wouldn't ask you if I weren't so tired. Val knows where to find the basket and the scissors."

Captain Valentine had already found them, and to Pera's dismay insisted upon using them. By her manoeuvre, she had, instead of effecting an escape, secured a *tête-à-tête*, the very last thing she desired.

She wandered about the garden with the fascinating lancer close at her heels, feeling all the while as if she were guilty of treachery towards Bertie Vyvyan, because he wouldn't take a snubbing, and she could not help being amused at his conversation.

She was not a foolish girl, ready to imagine a man in love with her because his eyes spoke such evident admiration, and his words conveyed half-hidden flattery.

Acquaintance, however, ripened readily amongst the roses, and when at last the basket was filled, and Pera turned her steps towards the drawing-room, she felt as if she had known Captain Valentine all her life.

He went to the window, looked in, and held his finger to his lips, his eyes twinkling with mischief.

"See me win a pair of gloves," he said in a whisper.

"No, she wouldn't like it," blushing as proxy for her aunt.

"Not like it?" his face growing serious. "You don't understand what we are to each other. She has been like a mother to me."

He stepped softly to the arm-chair where Lady Hargreave was sleeping as peacefully as a child, and bent his yellow head—his face softening wondrously the while—till his moustaches touched the cheek which still wore the bloom of a youth that had long passed away.

With a start she woke, flushing in spite of age to her temples, and, looking, saw the culprit standing with his finger in his mouth.

"You impudent, shameless creature!"

"Seven and a-half, please remember."

"If you think I'm going to give you a pair of gloves you are greatly mistaken."

"You will write by this evening's post to that shop in Regent-street," he said, composedly. "And now I regret to say I must slope. Might I ring the bell and order my horse?"

"You may do anything that will expedite your departure. I don't know what my niece will think of you. She will probably tell Sir Roger that your manners are very loose."

"Miss Clifford herself will reform them."

"I'm not equal to such a task."

"You are far above it; but you must stoop if you mean to conquer."

"Nothing is further from my thoughts," with a lofty smile.

"Then prepare to be conquered"—a retort that left her breathless.

CHAPTER IX.

THE day of the ball! The long-expected seventeenth has at last arrived, and Pera's heart has ceased to beat with the regularity of a well-constructed clock.

Her dress, the subject of much thought between a fashionable dressmaker and Lady Hargreave, is pronounced to be a triumph of good taste.

According to the latter, a girl who is "coming out" has two difficulties to steer clear of. She must try not to be so simple that she will be mistaken for a candidate for confirmation, and she must run no chance of being so overdressed as to be taken for a Mrs. instead of a Miss.

The dress was supposed to be an exact medium between the two—white satin foulard trimmed with white lace, and white roses nestling here and there amongst the graceful folds.

The bodice fitted the round, supple waist to perfection, and left both dazzling neck and arms exposed to view in all their youthful beauty.

Her hair was dressed in soft curls over the top of her small head, and her aunt insisted upon lending her a string of fabulous pearls to show off the whiteness of her well-shaped throat.

"Child, you look as nice as can be!" said Lady Hargreave, warmly, as she only refrained from kissing her niece because she was afraid of upsetting her complexion. "I wish—I wish your poor dear mother could see you now!"

The tears darted into Pera's eyes at the allusion to Lady Clifford, who was but a shadowy image to her mind.

There was always a void in her life, which no amount of lovers could fill, and she felt it much this night, as she stood, with uncertain feet, on the threshold of the new life awaiting her, before the next day dawned.

The maids put a light fluffy cloak over her bare shoulders, and she followed her aunt into the carriage as if she were walking in a dream.

All the servants were gathered in the hall, and a buzz of admiring exclamations pursued the two ladies as they drove off.

Lady Hargreave was looking her best in dove-coloured satin and jet, and her kind heart was already in almost as great a flutter as that of the girl beside her, as she wondered how her brother's child would be received by society, or, at least, that part of society which would be represented at the ball of the—th Lancers.

The town-hall was illuminated with a flaming design in gas, flanked by flags of many colours; and Pera, as she came after her aunt through files of gorgeous lancers, had her eye dazzled by swords arranged in stars on the walls, whilst she passed through what seemed an avenue of streamers.

The band had already struck up a favourite waltz as they mounted the staircase, the girl's young blood bounding with excitement, and her dark eyes shining like two stars.

She did not ask herself if Bertie Vyvyan would be there, because she knew he would; but she *did* wonder if he had forgotten, or whether he would meet her with the same smile as when they parted.

He was amongst the first who caught sight of her as she was being presented to the colonel, a fine, soldierly man, with iron-grey hair and a hook nose.

As their eyes met an electric thrill seemed to pass from one to the other, but the next moment Vyvyan's face clouded as it with a sudden remembrance, and though he came forward without loss of time, a frost had come over his manner, and he said,—

"How d'ye do?" gravely, as if he were speaking to a spinster of sixty.

Stung to the quick, and chilled and mortified, Pera answered with equal coolness, and was thankful when she saw Captain Valentine advancing towards them through the crowd of uniforms.

"Sir Roger is well, I hope?" said Vyvyan, just like an ordinary acquaintance. "I was afraid that at the last your cousin would put a spoke in the way of your coming to-night."

"Bernard has no power over me," drawing herself up in her trouble and indignation.

She saw his eyes open with a look of surprise, and then Valentine's voice said close at her elbow,—

"Our dance, Miss Clifford. Half has gone, don't let me be robbed of the other," and she went off willingly with the comparative stranger from under her whilom lover's nose! Bertie looked after them with a sigh, then shrugged his shoulders, and turned away, saying to himself,—

"Why should I object? I'm bound to steer clear of her, and if Val gets into a scrape it isn't my business. I suppose he can tumble out of love as well as in."

The next minute he had placed himself at the disposal of Ida Houghton, and Pera watching them presently whirl round the room together, looking perfectly contented, wondered if she had been a fool—an utter

empty-headed fool—to imagine that Vyvyan meant anything serious by his soft looks and lowered tones. Thank Heaven, he didn't know that she had been taken in; thank Heaven, at least, that her pride was saved from humiliation. And all the while, one of the most fascinating men in the Lancers was by her side, showing in every glance how much he appreciated what the other simply didn't care to win; and how proud he was to have her for a partner, when Vyvyan hadn't even gone so far as to put in a claim.

It was a dangerous position, principally because she was young, and inexperienced, and did not know the danger. Other partners came round her in crowds; but Vyvyan, her friend and lover, kept aloof, and Valentine seemed more a friend than he, so that she let him usurp his privileges, and danced with him so often that even Aunt Barbara began to be uneasy. She did not wish her niece to be dubbed a flirt on this her first appearance in society, even though the man she flirted with was her special favourite. When Pera was left with her for a brief space, she ventured to whisper a word of caution in her ear.

"You've danced with him quite enough, my dear! Even Val might be spoilt."

"But I'm engaged to him for the next!" Her pretty face flushed and troubled.

"Give it to your old friend, who looks as disconsolate as a disinherited son."

"He hasn't even asked me," with a tremble in her voice, "and he has danced half the night with Ida Haughton."

Just as if Vyvyan had overheard Lady Hargreave's remark he came across the room, and bowing low like a stranger, said humbly,—

"Mayn't I have one?"

"You haven't asked for it," looking like a swan with ruffled feathers.

"How could I when you were so much engaged? May I have one? It is an extra," he added, hastily, as he saw she was about to frame an excuse.

She bent her head in assent, and was thankful to think he did not know how madly fast her heart was beating, as his arm found its way round her waist.

Her head was in a whirl and her breath came short after they had taken a few turns.

"Are you tired?" he asked, in surprise, as she faltered out a wish to stop.

"Yes, rather. I suppose I have danced too much."

"With Valentine?" a bitter smile on his lips.

"With all the world," tossing her head.

"Not with me; pray tell your cousin that. How is it that he isn't here? You must miss him very much."

"Dreadfully; one always misses a wet blanket."

He turned and looked her full in the face, with a bewildered expression on his own.

"Is that how you speak of him?"

"I always say what I mean."

"Do you say it to his face?"

"Certainly. I don't stand on ceremony with a cousin!"

"But, good heavens! that sort of thing won't do for the future!"

"Why not? It has always answered to perfection; and, besides, I owe him a grudge. He tried to prevent my coming to this ball."

"Jove! he tries to clip your wings too soon. But why did he object?"

"Because—because," growing confused, and casting down her eyes.

"Was he jealous?" with a short laugh.

"Tell him he has nothing to fear. I never peep on other people's preserves," with a thrill in his voice, as his eyes rested almost fiercely on her bewildered face.

"What do you mean?" she stammered, with a half suspicion of some hidden treachery.

But before any explanation could be given, Val, the irrepressible, sauntered up, with a smile lurking under the tips of his moustaches.

"May I remind you of your promise?"

Supper—not a waltz," as she gave a puzzled look at her card.

"This isn't fair!" exclaimed Vyvyan, wrathfully.

"You should have looked a little sharper after your chances;" and he bore off his prize in triumph, unconscious of the chasm he was making in two lives, and only cognisant of the pleasure he felt in having that small hand resting once more upon his arm.

Soon, too soon, the ball was over. Valentine, not Vyvyan, put Pera into the carriage, and whispered soft-nothings at the window. It was he, and not the other, who asked if he might come on the morrow; it was his name and not Vyvyan's which figured so compromisingly often on the tattered little card she held in her hand.

"My dear," said Lady Hargreave, with a smile and a yawn, "your pace was a little fast to-night. I wonder if you know where it was taking you?"

"I shall soon be at the Gatehouse, and then it will all be over," with a sigh.

"Over? Child, it has just begun, and the end I can guess at!"

And Aunt Barbara went to bed feeling sure that Val would be her nephew.

(To be continued.)

SKULL CAPS OF TUNIS.—A curious manufacture is that of skull caps, noted, too, for their brilliancy of colour, their fineness and durability, as compared with those made in France and Italy. The wool, a mixture of native Tunisian and Spanish, the proportion of each varying according to the intended fineness and price of the article, is combed and spun into a fine soft thread, and woven, or oftener knit, into the conical caps. These are soaked in oil, and then a kind of form being placed on the knee of the workman, they are milled by rubbing the sides together, frequently turning the caps; by this process they are reduced to one-half their first size. When the cap is sufficiently thickened it is brushed with a burr from a kind of thistle, in order to bring out the nap, the fibres which project too far being cut off with shears. The caps thus reduced, napped and clipped, are in the form of a demi-globe, and are then sent to Tarvan, to be dyed a deep crimson, the water at this place being peculiarly adapted for the dyeing.

MENTAL GROWTH OF CHILDREN.—Very often we read of cases where parents are deceived in the character of their children. The truth is, they grow up much faster than parents are aware. While a mother innocently believes her little girl's mind is entirely occupied with her dolls and pets, in reality the child is weaving romances in which some callow youth is the central figure, and herself the heroine. She may fancy her boy is entirely engrossed with his marbles and his balls, but the lad himself has already determined his future career of renown in the pirate's or highwayman's fascinating profession. It is a terrible revelation when a surreptitious flirtation with the telegraph messenger, or a midnight escapade, shows too plainly where the heart of the child is placed. We know a case in which a boy of fifteen was charged with a crime, and finally confessed himself guilty. The surprise and agony of his mother were heartrending. "It cannot be," was her cry, "he is a little boy. Why, he is my baby. Every night he puts his arms around my neck and kisses me. It is not possible." Had the boy actually been a babe in the cradle the mother would have been no more astonished. It is a fiction pleasing to the parents' hearts that their children are but children, too young to know or dream of any evil more heinous than childish peccadilloes. But it is a fiction fraught with grave perils. Every mother ought to know if her boy smokes. Yet we can point to a half-dozen boys who puff along the streets, whose mothers firmly believe them to be angels of light, and would be indignantly incredulous if told the facts.

BOUND NOT TO MARRY.

—O—

CHAPTER I.

AN INTERESTING STUDY.

It is an evening in August, and two young men are standing on Harwich pier, watching such a sunset, as Turner or Constable might have delighted to paint.

They are artists. That you see at once by the loose manner in which their clothes hang upon them, by their wide-brimmed, slouched hats, their long hair, and likewise by their hands, which have a certain flexibility about them, such as only careful and intelligent work can give.

As the sunlight dies away, and the brilliant colours fade on sea and sky, and melt into the dim, dusky shades of evening, the two men become conscious of a chilliness in the air, and likewise of a certain sensation of hunger, which warns them that they have not yet dined, and it is time for them to do so.

"Come, let us go to the hotel before the people get in from the Rotterdam boat," says Charlie Rowe to his companion. "I'm afraid we are too late for dinner, but they'll give us something to eat. By Jove, what a face!"

This last exclamation is caused by the appearance of one of two ladies who are seated in a carriage, which draws up at the entrance of the principal hotel opposite the pier.

"Where?" asks his companion, but he needs no answer, for the girl's face is turned towards them, and he, too, is struck by its beauty. "I wonder who she is?" he remarks, carelessly. "The lady with her can't be her mother, and they are going to stay at the hotel; you can see that by their luggage. Come along, we may get to know them;" so saying he leads the way, Charlie Rowe following him.

The two ladies are in the hall talking to the manager, and the younger one, who cares less than her companion what accommodation they have, looks about her indifferently.

Suddenly she meets the admiring gaze of the two artists, and she turns her head quickly.

She had observed them in the street a few seconds ago, and the manner in which their eyes follow her seems to excite her anger, for she says, in a clear, silvery, and slightly imperious voice,—

"Thank you, any rooms will do. Give us the best you have vacant."

Then she makes a signal to her maid, whom the young men had not before observed, and she goes up the wide staircase, her servant and the other lady following her.

As soon as the object of their admiration is out of sight, the young men bethink them of their dinner.

They have been staying at the hotel for a couple of days; one of the waiters has taken them under his protection, and he now looks after their creature comforts in a manner that would be almost touching if it were not interested.

When they have finished eating, and are sitting over their cigars and wine, Charlie Rowe says something to the waiter about the young lady they had seen in the hall, and the man goes off to make inquiries.

There is no difficulty in learning all he wishes to know, for the young lady's maid has a dangerous habit of liking to hear herself talk.

"She is Miss Rosevear of Darrel Court," begins the man, but before he gets any further, Jack Hughes utters an exclamation, which makes his friend turn to him with the assertion,—

"You know something about her?"

"I never saw her before this evening," is the ready answer.

Then, turning to the waiter, he asks,—

"Who is with her?"

"A Mrs. Pritchard," is the reply. "She is a paid companion, and the maid don't think

much of her. She don't think much of her place at all by her own account, for she says her young lady doesn't allow any gentlemen to enter her doors."

"That doesn't seem very probable," says Hughes, carelessly. "I suppose the truth is the woman isn't allowed to have any followers."

"They'll have something to do to keep that young woman without followers," returns the waiter, grimly. "She says her young lady is going to take a house for a month at Dovercourt, and she is inviting everybody who speaks to her to come and see her there."

"A nice servant for a lady to have," laughs Rowe.

But Hughes makes no remark, though he rises, walks to a window that overlooks the harbour. Then absently lighting a cigar he strolls out of the hotel and into the street without inviting his friend to accompany him.

A turn to the right, another to the left, and he comes out by the lighthouse, and on to the long esplanade, which terminates only at the breakwater.

The sea is calm, the moon is rising, and the light which each boat and vessel must carry makes the wide stretch of water look as though a special illumination had been got up for the occasion.

Across the estuary, half a mile distant, gleam the lamps of the landing stage and railway-station of Felixstowe, and the young artist, as he walks slowly along by the water's side, cannot help thinking it a singular coincidence that he should have lost the boat to Felixstowe a couple of days previously, and being obliged to stay at Harwich one night, had, with his usual indolence, stayed on, and thus come face to face with the woman whom he had hitherto refused to meet.

"She doesn't look like a scheming adventures," he muses, between the puffs of his cigar, "and she is altogether unlike the creature I supposed her to be. Happily she cannot recognise me, so I shall feel safe to make her acquaintance and find out what she is like."

He comes to this conclusion slowly, and not without an effort. His prejudice against the girl with the lovely face is evidently very strong, so strong that even her beauty is scarcely powerful enough to overcome it.

By this time he has reached the breakwater, and he sits down and listens to the lapping of the water, and to the monotonous boom of the big bell that incessantly warns all boats and ships away from the vicinity of the buoy to which it is itself bound.

The calmness of the scene soothes him, and allays the feeling of reckless discontent that fickle fortune has made habitual to him, and when he rises from the seat and retraces his footsteps, a more cheerful expression than usual, comes over his handsome face, and he feels almost lighthearted.

Yes, he is handsome, with long black eyelashes, the under lashes so long that only looking into the eyes will convince you that they are not black.

A dark silky moustache shades his upper lip, but his square chin is cleanly shaven, the deep cleft in it giving an expression of sternness, which but ill accords with the rest of his appearance.

His hair, which is hidden now by his slouching hat, is dark brown, and falls into natural waves and curls, and he is tall, well-built, and broad-shouldered, though his ill-fitting clothes hide this as much as possible.

But he is not a very young man, he must be eight-and-twenty at the very least; and though he cannot be poor, or he would not be staying at the best hotel in the place, he certainly does not look like one who in the game of strife has scored success.

He is a landscape painter now, whatever he may have been in the past, and he has been moderately successful with his brush. Fortunately he has something beyond the proceeds of his work to depend upon, though but

for a wretched combination of circumstances he has talent enough and energy enough to enable him to make his mark in the world.

At eight-and-twenty, however, he has lost hope. There is nothing more for which he cares to struggle. In due time—if he lives long enough—the fortune that should now be his, will come to him, and until then he has only to pass his time as pleasantly and harmlessly as he can.

This is the reason why he has become a landscape painter. His love of nature is great, and to spend the greater part of his time in the open air, wandering from one lovely spot to another, is the nearest approach to his idea of perfect enjoyment.

It is late in the evening by the time he reaches the hotel, and he finds his friend outside the building, smoking and talking to some of the men who always seem to be hanging about the quay.

"Ah! you have come at last," says Rowe, in a tone of relief. "I was wondering what had become of you! I have just heard of a little cottage at Dovercourt that would just do for you and me for a few weeks. It belongs to the sister of one of these men. She lives next door, and would come in and cook for us. What do you think of the plan?"

"Excellent, I should say. We can hire a piano, I suppose, and we could dine at the hotel. Yes, that would suit me admirably!"

"Then we will go over and see it in the morning," says Rowe, in a satisfied tone; "this hotel is ruinously expensive."

The next morning the two artists are down early, and stroll out on the pier before breakfast. Perhaps they had seen from their window that Miss Rosevear and her companion had preceded them, and were taking great interest in the particular features of the scene.

There was a steam-boat getting ready to start for London with passengers, and the young lady seemed very much interested in the people who were going in it.

When the young artists drew near she saw them and turned away, and soon afterwards she and her companion went back to the hotel, from whence they did not emerge until with their servant and luggage they went away altogether.

"Are you quite sure they have gone to Dovercourt?" asks Charlie Rowe of the waiter who looked after him and his friend.

"Yes, quite sure, sir. They've taken a big white house at the back of Orwell-terrace; it isn't a mile from here. The young lady is rolling in money, according to her maid, and wanted the best house she could get."

The young men soon after this strolled over to Dovercourt to inspect the cottage about which Rowe had heard, and, thinking it would be more pleasant than lodgings, they decided to take it at once. Then Jack Hughes went to hire a piano, while Rowe returned to the hotel, paid the bill, and ordered the luggage to be taken to their new quarters.

"This is what I call regularly laying siege to a girl," remarks Charlie Rowe the following morning, when they have settled themselves in their cottage. "I certainly should not have been here if I had not seen her face the other night."

"Then it is a great pity that you came," observes his friend, gravely; "for nothing but pain can come to you, even if the lady proves to be more sociable than she appears."

"I suppose I stand as good a chance as you do!" retorts Rowe, who is good-looking, thinks himself handsome, and is nettled at the tone which his friend has just used.

"Very probably a much better one," is the cynical reply, "but that won't make any difference to you, at least."

"What do you mean?" asks Charlie Rowe, with mingled perplexity and anger. "You know something about this girl, and you don't tell me. Is there anything against her?"

"No, nothing that I know of," is the answer.

Then he pauses, and a few minutes elapse

before he says, slowly, and with so much deliberation that he seems to be weighing every word he utters,—

"As I told you, I never saw her before last night, but if she is the person I suppose her to be, she was adopted by a rich, eccentric old lady who left her a large fortune on condition that she does not marry."

"Monstrous!" exclaims Charlie Rowe, indignantly. "I don't believe such a will can stand. It could be upset, I am sure; it's immoral, it's illegal, it's—"

"Stop, my good fellow; it was a wicked old woman's caprice, nothing less," says Jack Hughes, gravely. "The old lady had no moral right to leave her property out of her family; that she knew quite well, and she did not exactly so leave it; for when this girl marries or dies the whole of Miss Darrel's wealth goes to her nephew, the heir-at-law. Now you understand what I mean when I say that success will only cause you pain, for she would become a beggar if she were to marry you."

"Thank you; I'm not a beggar myself!" retorts Rowe, angrily.

"Beggary is comparative; of course," replies Hughes, thoughtfully. "Now she has twenty thousand a-year, and she would lose that at once."

"Twenty thousand a year. She must save something out of that," muses Rowe; "and the very fact that she is not to marry, of course will make her want to do so. Besides, my dear fellow, think of the honour and glory of winning a woman who gives up a fortune for your sake! By Jove! I think I'd rather have that sweet consciousness than have the money with her."

"Would you?—there's no accounting for taste," responds Hughes, with a faint sneer; "but now you know the true state of affairs go in and win, by all means, if you can."

"And you?" asks Rowe, suspiciously.

"Oh, never mind me, I pledge myself to nothing," is the evasive answer. "I don't start as a suitor for the lady's favour; what I may drift into it is impossible to say. She's beautiful enough to make an anchorite forget his vows and peril his hopes of Heaven; but I am not susceptible in that way. She will want more than a pretty face to make me ask her to pay twenty thousand a-year for my devotion. It's a high price when you come to think of it."

"Yes, it is," assents Rowe, absently—he is thinking of his friend, not of the money; then he asks, suddenly, "Is there no way out of it? Can't she marry, and keep what she has? There must be a loophole somewhere, surely?"

"It has not yet been discovered if there is," replies Hughes; "and I must ask you not to invest me with a fictitious interest in her eyes by repeating anything I have told you. I heard the details I have given you from a friend of the Darrels, whose property she enjoys."

"Oh, no; I shan't say a word about it. I've got to make her acquaintance before I can talk about anything."

"And that seems as though it will be a difficult matter," remarks Hughes. "As for myself, I shall begin earnest work to-morrow. I am going out now to make a sketch."

So he strolls off, leaving Rowe at the piano playing some fantastic air, which seems to relieve his troubled feelings.

Naturally he makes his way to the sea, which cannot be seen from their cottage, and he descends the sloping, terraced walks that lead to the shore.

Half-way down he throws himself on one of the garden-seats so plentifully provided for the accommodation of visitors, and taking out his paint box begins to paint.

He has not been seated here long before a lady comes and sits on the same seat with him.

At first she is silent; and he, slightly annoyed at her proximity, does not even look at her until she asks,—

"Is the bathing safe here, do you know?"

"It is supposed to be so," he answers, without turning his head, "but I have not yet tried it."

"We came here on purpose for the bathing," continues the lady, spreading out her dress, and arranging the lace on it complacently; "my young friend with whom I am travelling is fond of swimming, and we were told that this bay is particularly safe."

He looks up now; it would be rude not to do so, and he recognises Mrs. Pritchard, the lady travelling with Miss Rosevear.

That he is surprised at her thus addressing him there can be no doubt, but he gives no sign of having seen her before, and answers, quietly,—

"I should think it is never safe for ladies to swim in the sea unless there is a boat outside to come to their rescue. I would never allow one belonging to me to do so."

"Ah! that is what I have often said, but though my young friend is very sweet she will have her own way, and refuses to let me sit in a boat and wait for her. Happily, I don't swim myself, but she is so reckless, it makes me quite miserable."

"You can hire a boatman to paddle about the bay, and your friend need know nothing about it," remarks Hughes, with a smile which Mrs. Pritchard cannot help thinking is peculiar.

"Yes, so I can; thank you for the suggestion. Here she comes; good morning!"

She rises, bows gracefully, and goes to meet a girl who has just appeared in the distance, while the artist, having returned her salutation, turns again to his painting.

He does not seem to notice the couple as they pass by him, nor to hear the clear, ringing voice of the girl say,—

"I came here on purpose to swim, and I mean to do so."

"But, my dear, you will be drowned, you certainly will," expostulates her companion, almost tearfully.

"Well, and suppose I am drowned, who will care?" is the reckless rejoinder. "Hugh Darrel will get his own, and will understand at last that nobody wished to keep him out of it less than I do."

He hears nothing further, for her voice has become faint in the distance, but he can work no more. He closes his case and strolls down to the beach, keeping the two ladies well in view. Something, he knows not what, draws him near to them, and when one only is to be seen on the sands and the other is swimming from the shore, his eyes follow her as if, were he once to glance away, she must inevitably be lost.

CHAPTER II.

ALMOST GONE.

THE summer has been a hot one. The sea is almost warm, and the sensation of swimming and of being able to tumble about in the water is so delightful, that Eleanor Rosevear forgets how the time must have passed since she left the shore, and being a little tired, she at length allows herself to float upon the surface, heedless of the fact that the tide is going steadily out.

It is very pleasant, this lying upon the water, drifting along as to some enchanted shore, and Eleanor has half-closed her eyes, and is in danger of falling asleep when she is roused by the fact that the water is no longer smooth, and she begins to swim again.

Not a moment too soon, either, for she has been caught in a current, carried along with it, and some minutes elapse before she can turn her face towards the shore.

When she sees how far she is from land a sudden terror seizes her, and so great is her fright that she barely keeps herself afloat.

She is a good swimmer, and under favourable circumstances might make her way back to the sandy beach from whence she started; but the currents are strong, the tide is against her, and a few strokes convince her that to

return, weary as she is and in the present state of the tide, is impossible.

This morning, when she first opened her eyes and remembered who she was, and what she was, and all the unbearable conditions that surrounded her, she rashly and madly felt that life was not worth living, and in the bitterness of her soul she wished that she were dead.

Now with death so close to her, death waiting for her, with no visible escape from death, she utters a wild cry for life, and looks eagerly about for aid.

She looks in every direction but the right one, and she has no strength left wherewith to shriek again, for she is being carried forward by a swift current, and every instant she dreads being dragged down by a power which she cannot resist.

Suddenly, as she is giving herself up for lost, she hears a voice calling to her, and she takes heart again; but the current is strong, and in its rapid career it encounters another current, more relentless than itself, and in the eddying swirl that follows the meeting what Eleanor has dreaded comes to pass.

Her limbs are useless, a power that is resistless drags her down in its cold embrace, and she can only fling up her white hands to Heaven before she sinks and knows no more.

It is at the risk of his life that Jack Hughes, who has come with a boatman to her rescue, and whose voice it was that she had heard, having prepared meanwhile for his dangerous dive, springs into the water as she disappears, and tries to follow her.

Once he comes to the surface, having failed; but the next time he is more successful, though, as he drags her to the side of the boat and with the help of the man in it lifts her over the side, he is very fearful that his efforts have been in vain.

He knows what to do, however, and as soon as he has pulled on some of his own discarded clothing he tells the man to row hard as he can to shore, while he lays the senseless girl in the bottom of the boat, and tries to restore respiration, for though her body is still warm she has ceased to breathe.

Just before the boat grates on the shore the girl's parted lips seem to utter a sob, so low that it might be the echo of a sigh; but Jack hears it, and springing out of the boat he, with others, helps to carry her to the small hotel that is close to the sands. Then he hands her over to the women while he sends off a youth for a doctor.

He waits about for a little while, till news is brought him that the lady is coming round; then he walks back to his cottage, fully half-a-mile distant.

An unpremeditated bath is apt to disarrange a young man's toilette, even though he may have been thoughtful enough to take off his outer garments, and Mr. Hughes is much more excited than is by any means usual to him.

"This is the most singular adventure that I am ever likely to meet with," he muses, "and to think of all that I have lost again to-day."

Then the recollection of that second dive in the swirling currents at the junction of the river and sea, comes back to him, and his face becomes a shade paler, while he breathes a prayer of thanksgiving for his own life spared, and for that of the girl rescued by his efforts.

He is a good deal knocked up when he gets home, and is not sorry to change his clothes, drink a glass of wine, and lie down for an hour or two, and here Charlie Rowe finds him when, late in the afternoon, he comes in for a cup of tea.

Charlie is full of Miss Rosevear's adventure, for by this time the whole of Dovercourt is in possession of the main facts of the case, embellished in no slight degree by repetition.

What Charlie does not know, however, and what is unknown in the place at large, is the name of the fortunate man who is spoken of as a hero; and he is discarding glibly enough

on the subject when something in his companion's face pulls him up suddenly, and he exclaims in a tone that is almost angry,—

"Upon my soul, I believe it was you who saved her!"

"If I hadn't done something preposterous why should I be lying here, feeling too knocked up to move?" replies Jack, with a yawn.

"And I have been telling you all about it! Why didn't you stop me?" retorts Rowe, indignantly. "Of course, you know all the details better than anyone else?"

"I don't remember anything very exciting about the whole affair," draws Jack, "except that the second time I went down after the girl I didn't think I should come to the surface again, the current was so confoundingly strong. However, all's well that ends well. But I wish you would roast up Mrs. Banks, and make her get me some dinner. I'm not equal to going to the hotel, and I have eaten nothing since breakfast."

Charlie Rowe is silenced, and does as he is bidden. He has secretly admired Jack Hughes ever since he first met him, now more than a year ago, and he is dimly conscious that his friend never cares to talk about his early life. That there is something in his history which he wishes to keep secret he is quite convinced, though he is equally certain that it is nothing disgraceful.

"He has rather lordly ways about him," he would muse sometimes; "but he is a jolly good fellow, and has good grit in him."

This last adventure, however, raised Hughes still higher in his estimation, and though he could not help feeling that his friend's chances with the heiress would now be greater than his own, he was just enough likewise to admit that it was right that it should be so.

"I won't say that I wish I had had your chance, my dear fellow," he observed, as he helped his friend to a well-cooked cutlet, "because your chance wouldn't have been of the least use to me, as I can't swim a bit; and as you have cut me out in the water, so, of course, you mean to cut me out on land. The heiress can't refuse you if you now propose."

"My dear fellow, have I not already told you that Miss Rosevear is not an heiress, in the strict sense of the word? She has, while she lives and remains single, a large income; but she cannot bequeath it to any one by will, and the day she marries she loses the whole of it."

"Are you sure of the accuracy of your information?" asks Rowe, still incredulous.

"I ought to be," returns Hughes, with a bitter laugh; "but make her acquaintance, and find out for yourself, only don't propose and then withdraw your offer, as I heard of one man doing, because your friends would then feel bound to cut you."

"Of course they would; but I should like to know her, money or no money, so if you will introduce me I shall feel obliged."

"I can't introduce you," returned Hughes, with a laugh. "I don't know her, and she doesn't know me. When I pulled her out of the water she was insensible, and I didn't see her after she came round. You'll have to go elsewhere for an introduction; but I dare say you will manage it easily by yourself. Her companion seems eager enough to make acquaintances."

"Oh, I'll introduce myself quickly enough, if you will let me. I'll go round with your compliments and ask how the young lady is."

To this Hughes at first demurred. He was not in love with the girl himself, and he had no intention of falling in love with her, and his natural modesty made him shrink from making claim to any gratitude at her hands.

At the same time it would be only an act of courtesy to send and ask after her health, and by so doing he would oblige his friend, who seemed really serious in his admiration, and who, with the happy-go-lucky way peculiar to his profession, appeared undeterred

by the fact that his bride, if he won her, would be penniless.

"Certainly it is not my business to keep her unmarried," he thinks, with unusual cynicism. "Rowe may go if he likes, and make a fool of himself and of her."

So he yields the point; and Charlie Rowe, determined that no time shall be lost, resolves to call at the White House this evening.

To-morrow Hughes may himself be so well as to have no excuse for sending a deputy, and Charlie feels that he will be able to talk more freely in the absence than in the presence of his friend.

He dresses himself with care, though he does not discard his velvet coat nor his felt hat. He would not look like the same man in any other costume, and he always feels that he has an individuality of his own to sustain.

Arrived at the White House Charlie knocks at the door, and inquires of the trim and coquettish servant who opens it if Miss Rosevear is at home?

"She's at home, sir, but—" replies the young person, looking steadily at him, and secretly admiring his bright, though pale, blue eyes, his golden brown beard and moustache, and his handsome sunburnt face.

After saying "but" she has stopped. Evidently she wants to know who he is, and what business has brought him here, but she is too cautious to ask, lest by so doing she should imply that he will be admitted.

"I come from the gentleman who saved Miss Rosevear from drowning this morning," said Charlie, with a smile, which at once wins the girl's goodwill. "He is too knocked up to call himself, but he would like to know how the young lady is."

"Oh! please, sir, come in. I'll tell my mistress; she'd be very much put out if she didn't see you."

So saying the maid leads the way to a small room fitted up as a library, and there leaves him for awhile. When she reappears again it is to say,—

"My mistress will see you, sir, if you will come this way."

As he goes up to the drawing-room, Charlie Rowe notices that this does not look like an ordinary lodging-house, and he cannot help thinking that Miss Rosevear is not practising economy with a view to saving money in anticipation of matrimony.

"I shouldn't be surprised if Hughes hasn't been misinformed about the whole affair," he reflects; "because it is odd for him to know so much about her business, and so little about her."

By this time he has reached the drawing-room door, and the next moment the subject of his thoughts is before him.

Evidently he has come armed with the best introduction possible, for the young lady, who is attired in a tea-gown of soft, dull pink, relieved by an abundance of lace, which makes a fine setting for her white face and hair of russet gold, rises and comes a few steps towards him, and asks in eager tones,—

"Did I understand aright, or was it you that saved me?"

"I had not that happiness," replies Charlie, bowing before her as though she were a queen; "it was my friend, Hughes. He waited to hear that you were coming round, then went home. He is a little knocked up, but he is anxious to know that you are getting on all right."

"Thank you. Won't you sit down? It is very considerate of him." Then remembering the presence of her companion she says, "My friend, Mrs. Pritchard," and having made the introduction she sinks back into her chair, apparently not having quite recovered from the morning's adventure.

Mrs. Pritchard is evidently glad enough to have a good-looking young man with whom to converse, and she begins to talk very glibly about the agony of terror she went through this morning when Miss Rosevear swam almost out of sight.

"I had been talking to your friend before Miss Rosevear came out of the house," explains the companion, "and when I saw her danger I entreated him to follow her. Not that he needed much persuasion; he had engaged the man, and was gone before I could say a dozen words. But, oh! the agony of waiting and watching—I can never describe it. I have gone through more to-day than I have suffered since my poor dear husband died!"

She seems in earnest. Probably she is, for if Miss Rosevear had died she would herself have been cast suddenly upon the world to shift as best she could; and, moreover, she is sincerely attached to the girl who has shown her nothing but kindness.

"Yes, it was very wrong of me, and I won't do anything so foolish again if I can help it," says the young lady, penitently. "I have no right to risk the lives of others, however careless I may be of my own; and your friend, I am told, was in great danger himself this morning."

"Yes; he thought at one moment that you must both be drowned, and his nerves are a good bit shaken. His muscles, too, were tried, and he is a strong fellow, broader and taller than I," says Rowe, generously.

"I think I have seen him with you," says the young lady, half-shyly. "He is an artist, is he not?"

"Yes; we are both artists. We intended to have taken up our quarters at Felixstowe," replies Charlie, "but we lost the boat the evening we arrived, so stayed at Harwich, then came on here."

He blushes at this part of his statement, for he remembers that they came to Dovercourt because they knew that she was coming.

"It was a fortunate thing for me that you did come here," she says, with a smile that gives animation to her countenance; "but I hope your friend will soon be better, Mr. Rowe, and will call upon us himself. I have no brother or father to send to him, and, little as I value my life, I am grateful to him for saving it."

"Am I to tell him so?" asks Rowe.

And the lady bows her head in assent. He feels that she thinks it is time now that he should go, and he knows himself that it is so, but the desire to stay a little longer is irresistible. For hours he could sit here feasting his eyes upon her rare loveliness.

She is not a small woman, neither is she exceedingly tall. Her features are large, though finely cut and regular, her brow is low and broad, her hair of russet gold—so abundant as to be almost unmanageable—is brushed to the back of her head, and then wound round it like a crown; while her dark brown eyes light up a face very pale, but with a warm paleness, like the inner petals of a white rose.

All this Charlie Rowe sees; and he thinks how, if she belonged to him, he would get her to dress, and with what colours he would surround her, when he is roused from his dreams by Mrs. Pritchard asking,—

"Where are you and your friend staying at present, Mr. Rowe?"

He tells her, then adds,—

"We thought we should like a den to ourselves. We are both fond of music, and the piano we have hired is the only decent piece of furniture in the house. You play, I see, Miss Rosevear?"

And, as he says this, he strolls over to the piano, to look at some music that is standing open, as though it had not long since been used.

"Ah!" he exclaims, with satisfaction, "I have been trying to get this. I wrote off to the publisher for it last night. It is rather a fine thing, isn't it? I should like to try it over."

"Do so, pray," says the young lady; but her companion, who knows her voice, notices that she says it coldly. Perhaps she thinks his behaviour rather too free-and-easy to be quite respectful.

Charlie Rowe sits down, and plays the accompaniment to the song, but he is not asked to sing it, though Eleanor offers to lend it to him; and this he declines, saying he shall be sure to get a copy by the morning's post.

He feels, however, that he has lengthened out his stay as long as he can do so, and he takes his leave, conscious that in some way he has not made quite as favourable an impression as he desired.

In point of fact, he has stayed too long, seeing that he came without introduction, and that there were only ladies in the house to receive him.

Had it been Jack Hughes who had called and prolonged his stay the case would have been different, for he had rendered signal service to the mistress of the house; but poor Rowe so evidently wished to improve the occasion for himself that Eleanor Rosevear instinctively stood on the defensive.

"I hope his friend will not be so difficult to get rid of when he calls," says Eleanor, wearily, when the young artist is gone. "As he is a gentleman I can't offer him money for the service he rendered me, and one doesn't exactly care to throw one's house open to a stranger."

Mrs. Pritchard looks at her steadily for a few seconds, then she says, in a slightly disdainful tone,—

"I should not be surprised if Mr. Hughes contents himself with having sent his friend, and ceases to trouble any more about us. He is a very different type of man to Mr. Rowe—quite *le grand seigneur*; and certainly the last man in the world to expect you to throw your doors open to him."

"How can you tell?" asks Eleanor, impatiently. "You only spoke a few words to him."

"Yes, I only spoke with him for a few minutes, but I am a pretty good judge of character, and think you will find that I am right."

So the matter dropped. But the next day passed by, and the next again, and they saw Mr. Hughes in the distance; but he did not call, neither did he send, and Charlie, not having been invited to repeat his visit, could not come on his own account.

Eleanor was piqued, and told herself that she did not care, but she felt mortified all the same.

She knew that something was due from herself to the man who had perilled his own life to save hers, but she could not go to him, and she had no one whom she could send. She could not offer him a reward, and it was quite evident that he would not seek one.

In this dilemma, what was she to do? Suddenly the idea occurred to her.

"I will go up and speak to him myself the next time I see him out-of-doors. And I'll thank him myself, and ask if I can be of any service to him in any way to show my gratitude. He can't be offended with me for doing that, even if he is as proud as Lucifer."

Scarcely is the resolution formed, than, looking out of the window, she sees the subject of her thoughts passing along slowly; and, lest her courage should evaporate if she does not act at once, she hastily puts on her hat, seizes her gloves, and goes out, walking towards the sea in such a direction that unless he turns back he must meet her.

CHAPTER III.

AT THE WHITE HOUSE.

MR. HUGHES does not turn back; in point of fact, he does not observe who is approaching him until the lady is so near that to avoid her would be an act of rudeness.

He has heard Rowe's account of his visit, and he has taken it into his head that Eleanor Rosevear is apt to give herself airs of superiority, and he has secretly resolved that it shall never be in her power to patronise him.

So now, when he meets her, and she bows, he lifts his hat and would pass on, if she did not stop and hold out her hand, saying,—

"Mr. Hughes, this is the first opportunity I have had of thanking you for saving my life. Pray believe that I am grateful!"

He takes her hand and holds it in his own for a second or two, but words do not come to his lips as freely as usual; and standing here close to her [he realises that Rowe's description of her beauty, which he had considered exaggerated, scarcely did justice to the original.

Eleanor, standing before this silent man, finds the situation awkward. If he would only speak she would know what to say, but he does not, and she falters out, hesitatingly and timidly,—

"If I could do anything [to show my gratitude I should be very glad."

"You can show it by not getting into such danger again," he replies, with a smile which makes her feel as though he thought her a child, or a person scarcely capable of taking care of herself.

"I shall certainly not do the same kind of thing again," she says, with natural dignity. "I have no right to tempt another person to risk his life, however lightly I may hold my own."

"But why should you hold your life lightly?" he asks, touched by the combination of sadness and bitterness with which she speaks.

She shrugs her graceful shoulders, and with a sigh, makes answer,—

"Every heart knoweth its own bitterness, or, to use a more homely phrase, 'only the wearer can know now the shoe pinches.' It would have been no great loss to me, and it would have been a distinct gain to some people if you had left me to my fate the other day, though it seems ungracious to say so.

She smiles sadly and deprecatingly, but she is evidently in earnest; and he, without showing any surprise, asks,—

"Do you suppose that anyone would have been glad to gain anything by your death?"

"I am sure of it," she answers, and her fine head and stately shoulders unconsciously assume a prouder attitude. "There is one man who would hear of my death with unfeigned pleasure, and I don't blame him for the feeling, although I have done him no voluntary wrong. However, that makes my debt of gratitude to you none the less heavy; and if I could be of service to you in any way it would give me very great pleasure."

As he had stopped when she addressed him, and showed no intention of turning to walk with her, she, with womanly tact, turns to go his way, and takes a step forward, so that he has no choice but to walk by her side.

"Thanks for your kind offer, but you can do nothing for me," he says, quietly. "I threw ambition to the winds a couple of years ago, and now I simply enjoy life on the limited scale my means allow."

"Two years ago!" she repeats, and there is a ring of despair in her voice as she adds, "It is two years since I ceased to enjoy anything."

"That must be the fault of your digestion," he replies, lightly. "For my part I enjoy my life amazingly; I live in the present, and let the morrow take care of itself."

"Your friend told us that you were a landscape painter," she says, looking at him curiously.

"Yes, I paint, because it is the easiest and pleasantest excuse for doing nothing, and for travelling about and living in the fresh air; but I shall never make anything of it as a profession. I don't even try to do so."

"Don't you think that is a pity?" she asks. "If a thing is worth doing at all, is it not worth doing well?"

"Yes, I suppose it is, if you look at it in that light," he responds, carelessly; "but there is a difference between doing a thing moderately well, and between putting the best that there is in you, even to your very life and soul, into your work. In the latter case one must have a motive for the intense effort, and I have none."

For a few seconds after this they are silent; she cannot ask him how it is that he has so little motive for exertion. She knows too little of him to warrant her in doing this, but he excites her interest greatly. He is as unlike his friend, Mr. Rowe, as it is in any way possible to be, and his very reserve attracts her.

"I paint a little myself," she says, timidly; "but I am sadly in need of instruction. I suppose you don't take pupils, Mr. Hughes?"

"No, I never gave a lesson in my life," he answers, curtly.

Then, noticing the mortified expression on her face, his good-nature asserts itself, and he adds, in a more friendly tone,—

"But my friend Rowe teaches, and teaches very well, I believe. I know he will be very glad to have you as a pupil. Shall I tell him you desire to receive lessons from him?"

"Thank you, yes, I shall be glad if you will," she answers; but she shows no eagerness to learn when it is Mr. Rowe who is to teach.

The implied preference does not flatter Jack Hughes, for though he admires Eleanor as a beautiful woman immensely, he is armed against her at every point, and he mentally criticises every word she utters.

They have only strolled on for a short distance before they see Mrs. Pritchard and Mr. Rowe, walking side by side, coming towards them, and talking so intently that they both start and look confused when they meet the couple about whom they are conversing.

After the first few words of greeting, Hughes tells his friend that Miss Rosevear wishes to become his pupil, and then he begins to talk to Mrs. Pritchard, and Eleanor has no choice but to converse with Charlie Rowe, and make arrangements for lessons with him.

She is piqued at the manner in which Hughes has taken her expressions of gratitude, and has calmly transferred her to his friend; and, probably, to show her indifference, she talks very brightly to Mr. Rowe, and arranges with him the hours at which he shall look over her sketches and give her lessons; and, to his relief, she says nothing about remuneration, intending that Mrs. Pritchard shall settle all business details with him.

They have, meanwhile, strolled towards her house, and on looking at her watch Eleanor sees that it is one o'clock.

"You had better come and have luncheon with us," she observes, addressing Rowe, who expresses himself delighted to do so.

Then glancing back, she says,—

"Bring Mr. Hughes in with you, Mrs. Pritchard, I have something to show him," and she enters the house, Rowe immediately following her.

Hughes is unwilling to accept the invitation. He is, as I have said, armed against Eleanor at every point, and yet in his heart he slightly fears her.

True, he had come to Dovercourt because he knew that she would be there; but he had not calculated on being called upon to render her such a service as to make her out of gratitude, seek his society, or throw open her doors to him.

Being a mass of contradictions, both in character and purpose, he now felt inclined to refuse what, under other circumstances, he would have eagerly sought; and if Mrs. Pritchard had not been a woman of the world, and able in a measure to see through his hesitation, he would have gone home to his solitary luncheon instead of coming into the house with her.

She was much too clever to let him escape in this manner, however, and as soon as she had landed him in the drawing-room she herself descended to the kitchen to exhort cook to send up as good a luncheon as possible for the young gentleman who had saved Miss Rosevear's life.

(To be continued.)

AS STRANGERS MEET.

—201—

Was it a dream? Oh, summer skies
Smile softly down on us once more!
And dusky nightingale so sweet,
Your silvery benedictions pour!
Oh, reapers, swing your blades again
In harvest fields of burnished gold,
And, wood-dove, sing your tender strain
As once you sang in days of old!

For then we met as lovers meet—
As happy lovers, fond and true.
The brooklet sang a love-song sweet,
The skies had donned their brightest hue
And as we traced on love's fair page
The vows that echoed in each heart,
We little dreamed the time would come
When we should drift so far apart.

But, ah! the flowers can never bloom
For us as in those rapturous days,
For now we meet as strangers meet,
With cold, estranged, averted gaze.
The ashes of our perished love,
From which the smouldering fire has fled,
Lie scattered by the winds of heaven—
Sole memory of the hopes now dead.

And yet, does there not come one thrill
Across the widening gulf of time,
To mind us of those happier days
Amid a fair Arcadian clime?
Does there not come one maddening thought
To bridge the gulf—alas! too late—
That we might yet be lovers true,
But for the ruthless hand of fate?

Ah, well! The golden dream has fled!
The blue has faded from our sky;
The ashes of our love lie dead,
And we are strangers, you and I.
No more beneath the skies of June,
No more amid the summer flowers
Can we recapture the broken links
Of that fond, fated love of ours.

H. W. C.

IVA'S QUEST.

—O—

CHAPTER XVI.

It was a bleak, tempestuous March day—the sort of weather which usually gives people's faces a pinched look, and even imparts an unpleasant tinge of redness to one of their most important features—the sort of day when any one would not be expected to look their best; and a man's worst enemy would not be justified in judging of his moral sentiments, of his personal appearance.

Without all was disagreeable and stormy. Within reigned luxury and peace. As the three men were ushered into my lady's presence each involuntarily started; the picture seemed so perfect, so entirely peaceful and homelike.

Heavy velvet curtains had been festooned across the middle of the drawing-room, thus dividing it into two apartments of moderate size. A large wood fire burnt in the grate, sending its ruddy glow upon the walls and windows. Hothouse flowers were grouped in the rare vases, a little bird warbled in his cage, a huge mastiff was stretched upon the thick fur rug taking his ease, and in the midst of this pleasant, homelike scene sat my lady, a small davenport in front of her, a pen in her white hand.

A pile of letters were before her. Evidently she was in the act of answering the numerous notes of condolence that had poured in upon her during the last fortnight.

Of the three men who intruded upon her solitude not one believed in her—not one had any faith in her professed ignorance of Gerda's fate; but Sir James Pierrepont and Dr

Sturgis felt a thrill of admiration for her, sinner though she was, as they gazed upon her perfect beauty, while Iva was conscious of nothing but an intense horror.

He had never doubted Lady Ducie had a hand in his darling's troubles, but he had never felt so convinced, so certain of it as now. Her marvellous beauty, her perfect ease and self-possession, could win no admiration for him.

He might have pitied her had she appeared a trembling, conscious criminal, appealing for mercy. He had no pity to spare for her now.

My lady betrayed not the slightest emotion; her colour never deepened.

"I hope you have come to tell me you repent judging me so harshly, Sir James," she said, in her rich, musical voice. "You were my husband's oldest friend; surely, for his sake, you will not turn against his widow and his child?"

"I shall never turn against his child," said Sir James, gravely. "Gerda will ever be dear to me."

My lady shrugged her shoulders.

"I was speaking of my boy—Lord Ducie." Here she turned to Iva. "I fear that title must have an unpleasant ring in your ears as applied to a helpless baby; but you are too noble and too generous to grudge my child his birthright."

"Lady Ducie," returned Iva, calmly, "I grudge your son nothing. I am here to-day on a painful errand. I hate beating about the bush, so I will come to the point at once. Where is your stepdaughter?"

My lady smiled compassionately at the young man's eagerness.

"It is a pity you troubled me for this interview if your only object is to ask a question either of your companions could have answered as well as I. Gerda left the Chase the night of her father's death, and nothing has been heard of her since."

Iva looked fixedly at the speaker, but she never quailed beneath his scrutiny. She bore it without flinching.

"I think you know what she was to me, Lady Ducie? You know I have more than a cousinly interest in Gerda!"

"I have heard you wished to marry her," observed my lady, coldly, "and that you were mad enough to believe she loved you."

"She loved me as her own soul, Lady Ducie. If to believe that be madness I am still insane."

My lady laughed a cold, cruel, pitiless laugh. "Mr. Ducie, it seems to me you are treating me with scant courtesy; but I will be generous. I told you truly I have no knowledge where Gerda is. I do not know the name of any person to whom she would go; but yet I am pretty certain of the reason of her flight."

"To escape your cruelty!"

"Softly! I don't think these gentlemen will charge me with cruelty to my stepdaughter. Gerda behaved atrociously. If I have kept secret her offences—it has been for the honour of my husband's name."

"You are speaking in riddles."

"Do you bid me unravel them?"

"Do your worst, or your best; it matters little to me. I have sworn to find Gerda alive or dead, if I devote my whole life to the quest."

Sir James shook his head.

"My poor boy, you don't know how heart-sick and weary you will grow from hope deferred."

"No matter, I have a glorious goal in view, to find my darling and make her happy."

"My lady," interposed Dr. Sturgis, "you have spoken very harshly to Mr. Ducie. Would it not be well if you remembered he is your son's only kinsman? He was himself heir to the title just as Gerda was heir to Netherton. Both have suffered from your infant's birth, yet neither have bewailed their disappointment. What harm can it do you if they spend their lives together? Don't you

think, for your husband's sake, who loved them both, you might do your best to restore them to each other?"

My lady smiled sardonically.

"You hold to it that I have the power?" "I think you know more than you will say, that—pardon me—you are keeping back some knowledge that might be important to us."

"I am."

The answer caused almost a revolution. The doctor started—Sir James begged her to go on; only Iva stood perfectly still, his eyes fixed on the ground.

My lady understood the action; he did not believe her word. Even if she could give him any hope he would hardly dare to accept it, just because it came from her.

"Dr. Sturgis," said my lady, casting her eyes full upon the surgeon, "does it never strike you that the weakest point in my story (that is how the lawyers would phrase it) consists in the fact that I told two different tales. I made the servants believe in Gerda's illness, I let you believe she was away."

"I knew you guessed if a suspicion of her illness reached me I should insist upon seeing her."

"Just so, and there was a strong reason against your seeing her. The night when Gerda refused Mr. Ward I learned her secret—a secret which not only obliged her to answer him as she did, but put a barrier between her and all thought of matrimony. I was angry with her. I thought of my husband's ancient name, and I own I felt indignant she should have held its honour so lightly. I caused her to be confined to her own room, and I meant as soon as my health was established to take her abroad, there was nothing harsh or cruel in this! Had she been my own daughter I could have done no more."

Sir James and Iva exchanged one hasty glance.

Dr. Sturgis looked troubled, my lady's words had filled him with a terrible fear, but to the other two her stepmother's revelation only seemed another urgent reason for Iva's quest.

"My lady," said Sir James, "you need have no fear that your stepdaughter will ever cause you a blush. My dear Gerda was married last October to the husband of her choice."

"Married!"

"At Pierrepont Hall, by special license; the ceremony was performed in the library; I gave away the bride. When Gerda returned to you after her last brief visit to us she was Iva Ducie's wedded wife as truly as though she had been married to him at St. George's, Hanover-square, with a bishop to tie the knot and half-a-dozen damsels to hold her gloves."

"But the concealment?" demanded my lady; "how could you deceive us so shamefully?"

Iva took the answer upon himself.

"Because we knew you had other views for Gerda. Because her father told me with his own lips he should do his best to persuade her to marry and forget me."

"You might have stolen her openly."

"And have Lord Ducie get the marriage annulled because the bride was under age? That would not have availed us much."

"I do not see that your actual course has availed you particularly."

"Pardon me, I could have trusted Gerda to the utmost, but I judged it would save her needless persecution if, when pestered by many another man, she could tell him boldly she was already a wife. Gerda is Mrs. Iva Ducie, and has been so these five months."

"And if I annul the marriage?"

"You cannot. Even if Lord Ducie had left you his child's guardian I doubt if you could have interfered in a matter which happened before your guardianship commenced. As it happens at this moment, were she unmarried I should have to ask Gerda of Sir James Pierrepont, and as he was our kind friend throughout I am not afraid he will turn

against us now. Gerda is my honoured wife; therefore, my lady, if you have hidden her away as you seem to imply for her own sake, I beg you to put your scruples to the winds, and restore her to her husband."

"I cannot."

"You will not."

"As you please. Your revelation quite destroys my theory. I had thought that when Gerda fled from me she either took her life to hide her troubles or joined her lover."

She spoke so simply and naturally that Sir James believed her. What she had said seemed to throw a new light upon her conduct. The Baronet was an old man, and not insensible to feminine beauty. He began to veer round to Julia's side.

"Poor child!" he said, in the slow, pitying tone often used by the very old; "poor, dear Gerda! if only she had had the courage to tell you the truth, Lady Ducie, how much better it would have been!"

"It was natural she should hide her secret. At the last Mr. Ward, in his cruel disappointment, told her the story of her birth."

"What story?"

"She was not legitimate," said my lady, quietly. "I can see it all now. I confess I could not understand it before. It is plain enough now. Knowing herself your wife, Mr. Ducie, and loving you above herself, when she discovered the truth, and that she was no fit match for you, she took her fate into her own hands, and ran away, resolved to hide herself from all she loved rather than that you should have to acknowledge as your wife—instead of Lord Ducie's daughter—a poor nameless girl, who had never been a Ducie at all."

Iva's face flushed hotly.

"She is a Ducie now, as I will thank you to remember, my lady. How dare you call my wife a nameless girl?"

"There is one point you have overlooked!" put in the doctor, looking coldly at the haughty beauty. "Who told Mr. Ward Mrs. Ducie's true parentage?"

For the first time in the interview my lady changed colour—she blushed crimson.

"I did."

"And why?"

"I thought it would advance his cause."

"Why did you want him to marry Gerda? What earthly object could you have?"

"I thought it for her good."

"Nonsense!" said Dr. Sturgis, savagely. "I don't believe in such disinterestedness as that. You forget your real motives."

"I think you forget something too," said my lady, quickly, "that I am a defenceless woman, and you are insulting me in my own house."

If she were innocent of the dread charge two of them in their hearts brought against her, she had right on her side in this speech. Iva looked at Sir James, and rose.

"I will not intrude upon you further, Lady Ducie. I warn you I hold you accountable for my wife's loss. I tell you I shall never rest until I find her, and if she has suffered through you I will visit her wrongs on you to the uttermost the law allows. I shall never enter these doors again unless I come armed with force. You have triumphed in all you undertook. A year ago you were poor and obscure; now you are a peeress, the mistress of a princely fortune, and your son is born to honours. But if to gain this you have sacrificed my darling, if you have injured her that you and yours may enjoy her heritage, rest assured it will not profit you. The God of the orphan will requite you for your wickedness. I go away foiled now, but rest assured a day will come when our positions are reversed, when I stand the victor, and leave you the vanquished!"

He never inclined his head, he never seemed to heed her mocking bow; he left the room in perfect silence. Dr. Sturgis followed him. Sir James was of softer mould.

"Good-bye, Lady Ducie," said the old man, kindly. "You know I loved Gerda so much I can't bring myself to quarrel with her hus-

band; but I think he's been cruel to you, very cruel; and if ever you and the little boy should need a friend be sure you'll find one at Pierrepont Hall."

"I couldn't help it," he explained, when Iva reproached him bitterly. "I daresay you're cleverer than I am, Ducie, and she's been to blame; but you see, my lad, she's a woman, and I couldn't bring myself to treat her as you did."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE dog-cart whirled quickly down the avenue. Dr. Sturgis glanced pityingly at Iva. There was no doubt their visit had been a miserable failure. He wondered what the young man's next step would be in the quest to which he had pledged himself.

"Come home with me," he said, kindly, as they passed through the lodge-gates. "You have had one long journey to day, and will be quite worn out if you go back to London to-night."

"Come with me," pleaded Sir James. "You won't turn against me, lad, because I'm not so quick to suspect evil as you are?"

"I couldn't," said Iva, wringing his old friend's hand. "I couldn't go to Pierrepont; it's not that I bear malice for your believing in my lady more than I do; but don't you remember the last time I was with you—my wedding, my brief dream of bliss? Sir James, I can't go to Pierrepont till I know if my wife be living."

"You will come with me," said the doctor, quietly, "and to-night we'll have a chat over the fire, and see what we can make of things."

"I will accept your hospitality gladly for to-night; but I have a scheme already. Doctor, will you come with me into Nether-ton after we have left Sir James at the station?"

"Willingly; but—"

"You know, Iva, I'd stay here gladly; I'd settle down at the Hall, and leave my lady to winter in the South alone if I could be the least good to you."

But Iva felt that with his old friend's softness of heart where women were concerned he would be a dangerous ally in the war he meant to instigate against Lady Ducie.

"I shall never forget your kindness; but I think I can manage best alone."

Sir James stared.

"You have not given up hope?"

He shook his head.

"On the contrary, my interview with Lady Ducie has solved one doubt—I am positive now that Gerda is alive, and she knows it!"

"But—"

"Remember how she started when she heard of our marriage? If my darling were dead how could the news affect her?"

Dr. Sturgis looked at Iva in a peculiar manner. The young man took the hint, and said no more until they had deposited Sir James at Nether-ton station, and seen him safely into the London train.

"The kindest soul I ever met," observed the doctor, as he watched the smoke of the engine gradually disappear, "but the most dangerous confederate you could have. Why, if my lady only went to him in tears he'd tell her all he knew."

"Yet he kept the secret of our marriage," said the doctor, who wanted to reveal it. My lady, having no suspicion of the fact, never questioned him about it. I have known Sir James for years, and I am sure he would be as weak as water in her hands. Now, Mr. Ducie, will you tell me what you think of doing? Will you be our guest for a few weeks, and keep a kind of unsuspected watch upon Nether-ton Chase and its beautiful mistress?"

"How well you have guessed my plans! That is just what I mean to do—keep a watch over Nether-ton Chase, only I must not be your guest."

"Why not? The village of Nether-ton's

too far; besides, the accommodation is wretched."

"Don't you wonder what I am wanting in Nether-ton this afternoon?"

"Very much."

"You saw that pretty little cottage, almost opposite the lodge gates?"

"Yes."

"I mean to take it."

"You—"

"I mean to take it. I shall order as much furniture as may be needful, discover old Nurse Brown, and install her as my house-keeper. I shall live at my lady's very gates, and it will be hard if I do not find out something."

"But suppose the poor girl is not at Nether-ton at all?"

"Wherever she is it is somewhere where my lady has sent her. By watching Lady Ducie I am seeking Gerda; but as soon as I have settled Nurse Brown on the premises I shall go up to London and put the matter in a detective's hands. Then, whenever he needed me, I could go up to town and leave the old woman on guard."

"But why be in such a hurry to secure the house? Surely you had better first speak to the detective?"

Iva shook his head.

"I must take the cottage this very afternoon or my lady may be beforehand with me."

"What should she want with it?"

"Nothing, save to keep me out of it. She is a very clever woman, and so must see the advantage it would be to her. Depend upon it, doctor, if she has anything to hide she will move heaven and earth to prevent my settling myself at her very threshold."

"I see."

"The question is to whom does the house belong? If it's on the Ducie property I have small chance of getting it."

"I can set your mind at rest on that point; it belongs to Sir James."

"Really?"

"All the land on that side is his. Years ago he had a pet scheme for having a lodge to his grounds opposite to Lord Ducie's. The lodge was built, but the expense of making a carriage drive from here to the house was objected to by his wife (like John Gilpin's spouse, she has a frugal mind), and so the scheme was given up. This cottage has been a sort of white elephant ever since; it's too good for a labourer, too small for a large family. I know Sir James told his lawyers they might let it for a mere song, so as to prevent it going to ruin."

"Will you manage it for me—so that my name doesn't appear?"

"I'll take it in Mrs. Brown's. Brown is such an everyday title that no one can take exception."

The lawyer was in. Dr. Sturgis told him a patient of his wanted a little country air, and had a fancy for Sir James Pierrepont's cottage.

The lawyer jumped at the bargain, and demanded twenty pounds a year, which was just double the rent he had asked for it the day before. Iva glanced at Dr. Sturgis and pressed a bank-note into his hand. The year's rent was paid in advance, and Lime Cottage was entirely at the disposal of the doctor's patient.

"I suppose Baynes had never seen you?" said the doctor, comically. "He didn't seem to recognise you in the least."

"No; I had never met him."

"Well, the thing is done now. I don't know that he'd have made any difficulty had he been let into our secret. You see, he's young Ward's rival, and hates him like poison."

"Does Ward still visit at the Chase?"

The doctor's lip curled.

"Much too often. My lady gives out she looks on him as a son—rather a far-fetched relationship. I can't see how a woman becomes a man's mother just because he is her step-daughter's rejected suitor."

They went to the one furnishing shop of Nether-ton, next an upholsterer's of moderate size. The doctor was spokesman.

"You know Lime Cottage, Ball?"

"Certainly, Dr. Sturgis."

"I have just taken it for a patient of mine, I want you to furnish it throughout."

The man opened his eyes at the magnitude of the order.

"Not grandly, you know. The things you've got in stock'll do. My friend will pay cash down, and give you a bonus of five pounds over and above your bill if you can get the job completed by to-morrow."

"And now I have a favour to ask of you," said Iva, as this business completed they drove rapidly homewards. "I want you not to say a word to Mrs. Sturgis or anyone about Lime Cottage?"

The doctor stared.

"I assure you my wife is perfectly trustworthy; there never was a woman less given to gossip than Mrs. Sturgis."

Iva smiled kindly. He was thinking of his first meeting with the doctor's wife, and the fair girl at whose side he had seen her.

"I would trust your wife in all things," he said, gravely; "but, doctor, unless I am mistaken, my lady has a faithful spy in your household."

"I think you are unjust, Ducie; I do, indeed. I assure you Marrables is innocent of all but having obeyed her lady's orders by waiting on Gerda while she was shut up in her own room. The poor girl has repented bitterly; yet, after all, she only did as she was told."

Iva shook his head.

"I may be wrong, doctor, but I can't trust her."

"Well, of course you have my promise. When you leave us to-morrow not even my wife shall know your destination."

"How far are you from the Chase?"

"Six or seven miles by the road; about two by the fields."

"Ah! And yours is an early household, doctor?"

"Certainly; everyone is in bed by ten except myself, but I have a taste for late hours. I fancy it is not uncommon in my profession. I shall be very glad if you will bear me company."

Iva assented. After dinner he sat in the drawing-room till Mrs. Sturgis went to bed; then he and the doctor, pipes in hand, adjourned to the study—a pleasant den at the back of the house, its window opening on the path that led to the garden entrance.

"I suppose Sir James will go back to Torquay?"

"Pretty sure to. And if you take my advice you will let him believe you're in London."

"It might be best. Hark! What was that?"

"A mouse, perhaps. Old houses like this are never free from them."

Iva shuddered.

"It was not a mouse. I feel sure someone was outside the window."

"Nonsense!"

A strange impulse seized Iva.

"What did you think of Lady Ducie to-day?"

"Think of her—what do you mean?"

"In one word, is she innocent or guilty?"

"Guilty; but—"

"And, if guilty, what punishment can be meted out to her?"

"None without proof."

"The proof will come."

A brief silence, and Iva turned to his host.

"May I draw up the blind?"

"Willingly. Our garden looks rather pretty in the moonlight."

One glance at the scene, and Iva spoke again.

"I want you to stand here and tell me what you see."

Half-puzzled Dr. Sturgis obeyed. Looking out he saw as plainly as at mid-day the winding path leading down to the garden entrance,

and along it moving swiftly a slight, dark figure whose feet seemed almost to fly over the hard frozen earth.

"That is your 'mouse,' Dr. Sturgis!"

The doctor started.

"What do you mean?"

"That I was right. Lady Ducie has one faithful spy in your household—one who has even now started to tell all she could glean of our conversation."

"Then that is why—"

"Why I introduced my lady's name so suddenly—why I drew from you your opinion of her guilt. I felt someone was listening. These glass doors don't shut out sound. At dinner I spoke confidently of my return to London. When Marrables tell her lady that, coupled with my guilty opinion of her, she will take flight. She must be betrayed into some desperate step as soon as I have left the place and, so instead of being on my way to London I shall be safely established at Lime Cottage, ready to inspect her every movement."

"You make too sure," said the Doctor, a little tardily (which of us, I wonder, can bear to hear our pet paragon spoken scoldingly of?). "I grant you a figure was in the grounds, but we have no proof it was Marrables."

"But we soon can hear."

"How?"

"Let us look for Marrables. If she is not in the house we have pretty good grounds for believing it is her we saw."

"I don't like to seem to doubt her."

"Who is to know it? It is only half past ten. There would be nothing unreasonable in ringing the bell. I can have a sudden toothache, and you can want hot water for my relief. The cook, I hear, is elderly, so she would naturally send Marrables to answer the bell, and enjoy her own repose."

"She could not send her."

"How so?"

"They do not sleep together. It was Marrables' only stipulation, on taking a situation so far inferior to her last, that she might have a room to herself. She told my wife she was a bad sleeper, and would be a perpetual annoyance to a fellow-servant."

"Then—where does she sleep?"

"In a little room out of the pantry. I suppose it was meant for a butler, if any tenant of this house were ever grand enough to keep one."

"Better and better. I can need cold water instead of hot, and we can go to the pantry to rummage for a jug to put it in."

"I don't like," said Dr. Sturgis, reluctantly. "Won't you go alone?"

"And leave you unconvinced. Not to be thought of! Come, doctor, after all we aren't doing anything very heinous in entering your own pantry."

"No."

He took up a small lamp, and conducted his guest down a labyrinth of passages to the pantry. All was in beautiful order, but a candle had evidently been left burning in the inner room, whose glass door was screened by a prim little muslin curtain.

"Come on!"

"Perhaps she's in there?"

"Not she. She'd have started or shrieked at the noise we made. No, we shall find the nest empty, depend upon it."

And they did. The little room was exquisitely neat. A few religious books were about; a Bible and Prayer-book reposed on the dressing-table. All was ready for the perfect parlour-maid—only she herself had flown.

"She may be with cook?" suggested the hard-to-convince doctor.

"She may. Let us search the lower part of the house first."

But they were interrupted. Cook hearing the noise came down in the most wonderful déshabille to demand what was the matter. Her mistress, she said, was scared to death.

"It's all right, cook. I only wanted some hot water for Mr. Ducie's faceache."

"Dear, dear! Sir, I hope it's not bad?"

said the cook, sympathetically. "I do think the faceache must be in the air, for Marrables has it very bad, too, to-night. She went to bed with it as soon as she'd brought out the dinner things."

The worthy soul retreated to her own abode in the attics. The doctor glanced at Iva.

"You were quite right."

"Aye."

"Now what is to be done? If you let Marrables know she is found out and dismiss her, we lose all hold of watching her intercourse with the Chase; but I confess I shrink from the thought of having her here after this."

Iva wrung his hand.

"Keep her, doctor," he pleaded, "for Gerda's sake. You see now she is in my lady's confidence. Believe me, if ever we find Gerda it will be enough watching these two women. So long as Marrables is in your house you have some hold over her."

"Precious little!"

"If you send her away she will go straight to Lady Ducie; and together they might grow desperate!"

"I think Marrables has done a pretty desperate thing to-night!"

"She might do worse."

"Worse?"

Every drop of blood had fled from Iva's face. He had to cling to his friend's arm for support.

"If my darling is in their hands," he said, brokenly, "she is a prisoner against her will. Knowing how they have wronged her they would not dare to let her go free. But there is another freedom they might give her without any danger to themselves—an extra dose of opium, a purpose-mistake in her medicine, and they might achieve their end!"

The doctor shuddered.

"I understand. There is but one witness against them, and they think without her testimony they would be safe. Iva, I will keep Marrables now at all hazards. I will be as cautious as you could wish. I understand your meaning now. Any vengeance he might take would recoil with awful force on Gerda?"

"That's it, doctor."

"But what's their object?"

"Object?"

"Whenever wickedness is committed in this world," said the Doctor, slowly, "the folks who sin generally have something to gain by it. I confess I don't see what profit can come to my lady if she keeps your wife shut up for ever."

"She may fear detection. A woman like Lady Ducie would desire at all hazards to stand well with the world."

"True; but, in the first instance, if she had not used her influence to prejudice her husband against the match, Lord Ducie would have given you his daughter gladly. Now I want to know what object she had in interfering then?"

Iva shook his head.

"Perhaps she feared our joint influence counteracting hers—perhaps she thought I might persuade Lord Ducie to leave his estate to Gerda!"

"I believe he meant to."

"Doctor!"

For some time now, Iva, I've had my doubts as to that will. I was so flurried when it was read after the funeral—I really hadn't my wits about me!"

"But do you suspect foul play?"

"I can hardly say that." Then, after a pause, "you see Lord Ducie told me he had done his utmost to make his will a perfectly just one. He said he had left me his daughter's trustee, Sir James her personal guardian. In the will, as I heard it read, Sir James stands as her guardian, but there is no mention of any trustee; and no one in their senses can call it just to leave all he had to his wife and her unborn child, passing over Gerda. I tell you, Mr. Ducie, it struck me all of a heap."

"Did you look at your own signature?"

"I did; and it's right enough, even to the flourish of the capital S, which my wife says I always make look an eight. Yes, and Nurse Brown's laboured, crabbed hand is there, too, to the life. There's the very blot she made by way of a full stop. The will must be right, and yet I can't believe Ducie would make such an one."

"I suppose you were present when the lawyer produced it?"

"I was; indeed, no one but myself knew where it was to be found. Lady Ducie declared she had no idea where to search for it."

"And where was it?"

"In the bottom drawer of his pedestal writing-table. I saw him place it there myself."

"And the drawer was locked?"

"Yes. I remember Lord Ducie placed it carefully at the bottom, and covered it with other papers. When young Ward took the key from my lady and unlocked the drawer it was the first thing he came to."

"And didn't that make you suspicious?"

"Hardly. Lord Ducie might have changed its place a dozen times without my knowledge. Young Ward read the will. I remember he rattled off the contents very glibly. I went up to him and asked to see my signature. He started, so that I quite expected to find the will a forgery and my signature also; but no, there it stood, the same as ever, a little higher up on the sheet than I fancied, but still just the same, even to the eightlike S."

A clock chimed midnight.

"Shall we go to bed, or do you think of sitting up for Marrables?"

"To bed, by all means. I doubt if, however long we sat up, Marrables would return if she saw a light in your window."

"Ah! Good night, Mr. Ducie, then, and, remember, you may rely upon us. We will keep Marrables as long as seems needful for the success of your quest."

Iva went to his own room, but sleep seemed impossible. He put out his light, crept stealthily to the window, and looked out into the moonlit garden.

Surely Miss Marrables must soon be returning. If she was often detained by her late mistress so late as this, it seemed wonderful she could get through her day's work on the morrow with such perfect success.

He wondered what she and my lady spoke of in their constant consultations. He almost wished the old days of arbitrary punishment were in vogue, and he could get possession of Marrables, and subject her to the torture until she confessed her lady's secrets.

Softly! Iva held his breath and waited. Here along the path, slowly and cautiously, came Marrables, and, strangest part of all, she carried a bundle in her arms.

Iva could hear his own heart beat as he watched her, he felt so certain that bundle contained some clue to his darling's fate. If only he could look at it! He must, by some means or other—he must, and would!

It was strange Lady Ducie should give her ex-maid a bundle; what (save Gerda herself) could she have to hide? And, besides, surely Netherton Chase offered few better places of concealment to its mistress than could be possessed by a humble servant, whose only private apartment was a little bedroom ten feet square.

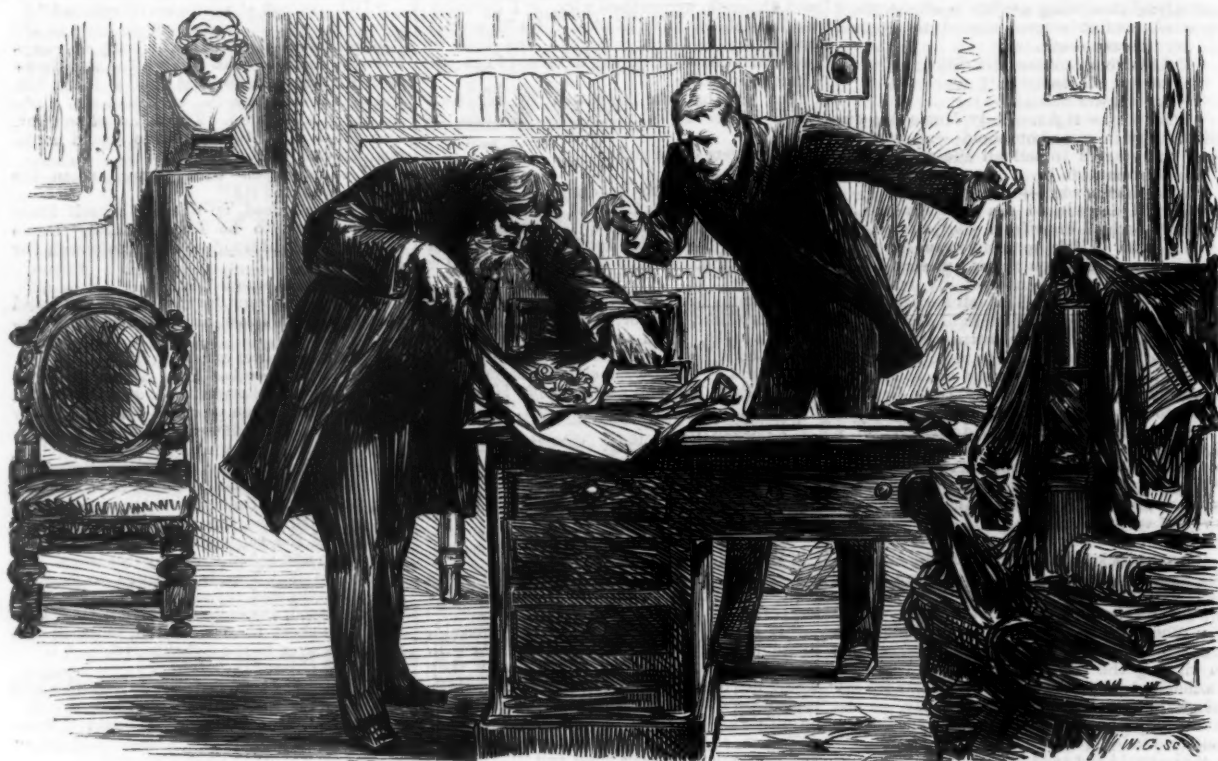
Iva was down early despite his wakeful night, early enough to slip a paper into the doctor's hands before his wife and children were about.

The paper had only a single line,—

"Send Marrables out on a long errand. This is important."

"My dear," said the Doctor to his wife at breakfast, as he sat with his children on either side, his guest opposite him, and the model parlour-maid waiting deftly on the little party—"my dear, do you know Lady Madelaine leaves for London to-morrow morning?"

Lady Madelaine lived a good three miles



["OH! WHAT DID IT ALL MEAN? IN MERCY, WHAT HAD BECOME OF GERDA?"]

from the doctor's house. She was the god-mother of his eldest child, and, to confess the truth, was expected to do great things for the little ward."

"Dear dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Sturgis, in a voice of regret; "and you've never found time to take the children over to see her!"

"I would take them to-day, but I am particularly busy. Of course the walk is too far for you; but I was wondering whether Marrables might not manage it."

The model parlour-maid, whose rôle was intense amiability, consented at once. It was a mild day in early spring, quite a contrast to the wintry yesterday. Perhaps Marrables thought a long ramble with the little girls would be a pleasant change from her ordinary duties.

She promised to be ready by ten o'clock, and Mrs. Sturgis, whom her absence made busier than usual, was shut up in the kitchen before they started.

Iva and the doctor were quite free from observation when they heard the front door close on Marrables.

"She can't be back under two hours, and if Lady Madelaine is at home I don't expect she'll let the children come home till after lunch. You are quite safe. Now tell me the meaning of your mysterious note?"

"She brought something home from the Chase last night, and I mean to see what it is."

"It can't help you."

"It may. Doctor, don't you turn against me. I want you to come with me to Marrables' room."

The doctor yielded at once.

"This old linen press holds most of her treasures I expect. She begged the use of it of my wife. Oddly enough, Mrs. Sturgis and I both possess keys to it. My wife gave hers to Marrables, but I still have the duplicate. I hate prying into a servant's things, but I

suppose you'll want me to unlock that door?—so here goes."

The orderliness which prevailed in the little room was strangely missing in the press; things seemed to have been tossed in hurriedly and in confusion, but Iva recognised the bundle promptly enough. He took it out carefully, unpinned it, and saw a woman's dress of plain blue serge, braided rather elaborately, a tight-fitting cloth jacket, and small hat trimmed with velvet.

Mr. Ducie kept quite calm. He did not know the special meaning of these things, but for the doctor, finding them, had a fearful significance.

"They are hers," he said, solemnly. "The last time I ever saw your wife alive she wore that dress; this hat was on her arm."

Iva shuddered. "Do them up again," he muttered, hoarsely. "I must search further."

But the sound of cook's footsteps were heard; evidently she was coming to perform Marrables' duties in the pantry. The two gentlemen must go. Hurriedly Iva caught hold of a little fancy box at the back of one of the shelves, which seemed to him likely to contain letters, and from its position would not easily be missed. Then Doctor Sturgis turned the key in the lock, and they went into the pantry, only a moment before Mrs. Cook came bustling in.

"I've been looking to the pipes, cook," said the Doctor, leaning gravely over the sink. "I think they'll stand plenty of heavy frosts if we have them."

And cook acquiesced, thinking what a chatty, affable master she had, as the doctor conducted his guest back to the study.

"What's in the box?"

"Open it," answered Iva; "I cannot. I feel as if it would tell me something of Gerda."

And it did.

Doctor Sturgis opened the box, and took

out the contents, covered many times with silver paper. He removed the wrappers carefully, but as he took off the last a piercing shriek from Iva reached him, for there on the table lay bright masses of sun-tinted hair.

Iva might well say the box could tell him of his darling. He loved each one of those silken tresses dearly. He had seen them last on his wife's head.

"Oh! what did it all mean? In mercy, what had become of Gerda?"

(To be continued.)

A MAN without discretion may be compared to a vessel without a helm; which, however rich its cargo, is in continual danger of being wrecked.

IMPORTANCE OF COOKERY.—As bad cooking affects the health and spirits of the whole household, the house mistress should know how to cook well. A growing family is no light responsibility, as every one who has the care of such can testify, and in order that the children may become strong and healthy their food should be selected with the same degree of care that must be expended in following the requirements of a doctor's prescription. It should be regularly served at stated hours, and set before the partakers in as attractive a form as possible at all times, as outward appearance forms no small part of the enjoyment of a meal. The foods in each household are so different that no rules should or can be given except that in all cases, simple, wholesome food is preferable and really more palatable than the dainties so often placed upon the table, and the indigestibility of which forms no small part in their general make-up. Hence the importance of mothers teaching their daughters the great and truly beautiful accomplishment of being good cooks.



["YOUR WIFE!" GASPED THE OLD MAY. "THEN, INDEED, I NEED WISH HER NO GREATER PUNISHMENT!"]

NOVELETTE.]

DOUGLAS McQUEEN'S SACRIFICE.

CHAPTER I.

A FATAL MISUNDERSTANDING.

BERYL MACNAUGHTEN was radiantly happy, for she had just received a letter from the one being in the world she loved with her whole heart and soul, asking her to be his wife.

His wife! Oh! how her pulses throbbed at the very thought of being for ever by his side! How happy they would be, when they were all in all to each other! And she smiled, as she re-read his words of love, begging her to fix an early date for their marriage.

"How impatient he seems, poor darling!" she whispered, half-aloud. "Oh! Charlie, I knew you loved me, and I felt you were not playing with me; and as you care for me so very much I suppose I must look over all the naughty stories I have heard about you, and when once I am your wife I feel sure you will not wish to find amusement outside your own home."

And she smiled a glorious smile, and leaning her head against the open window-sill she listened to the joyous skylark, who rising higher and higher in the blue ether, seemed to make the air ring with his song of praise, and raising her eyes to heaven beyond, she breathed a prayer of thankfulness, that she had at last been granted the desire of her heart.

At that moment her father, Sir Frederick Macnaughten, entered the room, and walking to his daughter's side, he placed his arm affectionately on her shoulder.

"How you startled me, dear father!" said Beryl, smiling up at him; "I never heard you open the door, and, of course I did not expect

to see you, for it is not often you honour me by paying me a visit in my little boudoir; but now you are here I hope you will be like the German, who said, 'When I come, I stay.' So take that easy-chair, and make yourself comfortable," and rising, she pushed it towards him.

"I will not sit down, thank you, my child, for I have only a few minutes to spare, but I was anxious to have a little talk with you before I go to London, as I may not see you again during the day," and taking her hand gently in his own, he looked steadily into her eyes, as if to watch their expression.

"Beryl," he continued, "I have had a letter this morning from some one who loves you very dearly. Can you guess who it is?"

"Yes! indeed I can," replied the girl, with a joyous smile, "for I, too, have had a letter from a certain 'some one'; so your mighty mystery is solved, dear, without my having the trouble of guessing?" and she looked up saucily into her father's face.

"Have you, Beryl?" he answered, in a surprised tone. "May I ask what he said to you? for he told me he would not mention the subject to you until he had my permission to do so."

"I expect he found he had not patience to wait for your answer, dad, and wanted to learn his fate at once; so he wrote me just a nice little note, to ask me a very important question," and the thought of that note brought the blushes to her fair young cheeks. "And you won't mind very much if I say 'yes' to it, will you, dear father? For he tells me he cannot live without me any longer, and if I will be his wife he will make me ever so happy."

"Well! my child, I suppose I must forgive a lover's impatience, although I must confess I would rather he had kept his word with me, and as you seem so pleased, dear girl, I will say no more about it. I wish you every happiness, Beryl, and although I shall miss

you very much, I shall be proud to see you the wife of so good a man."

And having presented his face to his daughter to kiss he left her once more alone, and, if possible, happier than before.

"Dear old father!" she thought, as the door closed, "how kind he was! and I always thought he did not like Charlie, for he never seemed to encourage his visits; but I suppose that was because he had not declared his love for me. Well! the past is over now, and I am so happy!"

And opening her davenport she found some of her pretty crested paper, and began to write her first love-letter.

Before she had finished it she heard the hall door shut, and seeing her father's retreating figure going down the drive she went to the window, and called "good-bye" to him; and in return he took an envelope from his pocket, and smiling up at her, and waving an adieu, he wended his way towards the station.

As he dropped his letter into the post-office he gave a great sigh of relief.

"When once she is McQueen's wife I shall feel happy about her," he murmured, half-aloud, "for he is a good fellow, and has plenty of money into the bargain, which is fortunate, as I have not much at the present time, although no one is aware of it but myself, and with a rich son-in-law things will improve a little. Poor, dear Beryl! I always fancied she cared for that scamp Danvers, and that I should have had a lot of trouble with her on his account, but I am truly thankful I was mistaken."

"A penny for your thoughts!" exclaimed a handsome young man, as he came suddenly round the corner of the road, meeting Sir Frederick face to face. "Why, pater, you are looking as pleased as Punch about something," and turning round he accompanied his father to the station.

During that walk Sir Frederick told his son that Beryl was engaged to Douglas McQueen,

and that he had written to invite him to come down the next day.

"I am indeed awfully pleased to hear it," replied Percy Macnaughten, in genuine surprise. "But what a close beggar he must be, for I spent the evening with him only last night, and he never even hinted at such a thing."

"He did not know what your sister's answer might be, I suppose," replied Sir Frederick. "Men do not like to let anyone know, in case they should be refused. It takes the pride out of them—so they say nothing until they are sure; and certainly in his letter to me he did not seem to be at all confident that Beryl did care for him—but I am glad to find she does."

By that time they had arrived at the station, and raising his hat to his father Percy Macnaughten retraced his steps.

"I am glad, too, that she cares for him," thought he. "Douglas is the best fellow in the world, and I should be sorry to see him miserable;" and jumping a ledge beside him he cut across the meadows to his home, and having donned his flannels he spent the afternoon upon the river—and, as he was engaged out to dinner, Beryl was left alone the rest of the day.

The next morning, after breakfast, Sir Frederick looked up from the columns of the Times, and called his daughter to his side.

"Beryl," he said, kindly, "you will be pleased to hear that I have invited Douglas McQueen to lunch with you to-day, and as I am again obliged to go to town you must take care of him, which, under the circumstances, I suppose you won't object to," and he looked at her for a reply.

"Of course, father, I will take care of Mr. McQueen if you wish me to do so; but I hope he won't remain very long, as I have invited Charlie to dine with us, and he will be here about three o'clock."

"Charlie! Who the deuce is that?" demanded Sir Frederick, growing white to the lips; and Beryl, seeing his face, became suddenly pale, but with a determined voice she replied,—

"I think you need hardly ask who Charlie is, considering you gave me permission yesterday to accept him as my future husband."

"I did nothing of the sort, and you know it," answered Sir Frederick, roughly. "I gave permission for you to be engaged to Douglas McQueen, and he is the only man I will allow you to marry."

Beryl restrained her temper with an effort, and, laying her hand gently on his arm, she looked pleadingly in his face.

"There has been some terrible mistake between us," she replied. "I remember now; we never mentioned either Charlie's or Mr. McQueen's name, and that explains the whole thing. Charlie wrote to me, and Mr. McQueen to you, and we neither of us dreamt we were not both referring to the same person. But it is too late now to withhold your consent, for yesterday I wrote to Charlie, and accepted him; and, father, I love him, and will never give him up!"

"Beryl," said Sir Frederick, sternly, "I have written to Douglas McQueen and told him that you have consented to be his wife; and as he is coming down to see you to-day I must insist upon your conducting yourself properly, and meeting him as a lady should the man she is engaged to marry."

"I am sorry if you are disappointed, but in this I will be obeyed; for I will not allow Mr. McQueen to be made a fool of any more than I will be made one myself. And I might as well tell you at the same time, that even if Mr. McQueen had not asked you for your hand I would never have consented to your marrying Charles Danvers, who is an unprincipled young scoundrel, who has neither heart nor brains; and if he pretends to care for you it is because he imagines you will have money."

"But I can tell you, Beryl, if ever you marry Danvers you will leave my house for ever, and I will not give you a single farthing;

while, on the other hand, Mr. McQueen is a noble fellow, and I should be proud to see you his wife. So be a good girl, and give up this nonsense."

And he held out his hand to her; but Beryl was in no mood now to be conciliated, particularly when she was expected to give up the man she loved, to prevent her father "being made a fool of." So standing before him, with her head erect, she told him,—

"That although Mr. McQueen might be all that he should be as a gentleman, she had fully made up her mind to be true to Charles Danvers; and, if he refused his consent she should marry him without it, and that would at least prove whether Charlie wanted her or her money;" and the look in her eyes showed she meant what she said.

Just then Percy entered the room, and glancing from his father to his sister gave a long whistle.

"What on earth is the matter?" he asked. "You are standing like two bull-dogs ready for a fight!"

They both appealed to him at once, and told their story. Each expected him to take their side, but Percy Macnaughten would do neither; and going off into peals of laughter he left the stormy scene, saying,—

"The best thing he could do was to keep out of it, for it was a case of Greek meeting Greek, and neither of them would give way."

But though Percy seemed to take so little interest in the wordy war between his father and sister, he intended to help Beryl if it lay in his power; and he knew to do that he must pretend to be perfectly indifferent before Sir Frederick. So he seated himself under the shadow of an old bay tree which grew close to the house, and there waited until he heard the dining-room door shut with a decided bang. And then he arose and quietly stepped into the apartment by the window which opened upon the lawn.

Beryl did not hear him enter, and he found her rocking herself to and fro, with passionate tears falling unheeded down her cheeks.

"Come, old girl!" he said, coaxingly. "What is the use of crying? It is sure to be all right in the end. The pater is certain to give way sooner or later, and the less you oppose him the quicker you will get your own way. So don't fret, and try to cheer up!"

And he took her hand in his and smoothed it gently.

"It is all very well for you, Percy, to talk of not fretting and tell me to cheer up. I should like to see you cheerful under the same circumstances. It may be a good joke for you, but I fail to see the fun of it."

And she tried to draw her hand away, but Percy would not let her.

"Now, old girl! it is no use your being cross with me, you know very well it is no fault of mine; and if you will dry those poor, little eyes of yours, and talk like a sensible little woman, I will do my best to help you. So now to business. First of all, in an hour's time Douglas McQueen will be here, and as the pater will be in town you will have to meet him."

"Sir Frederick does not intend to go to London now," replied Beryl, coldly, "but means to remain at home, to make me receive Mr. McQueen with open arms, and I won't do it!" she cried, passionately.

"All right, don't!" replied Percy, with an amused smile; "but I would not 'Sir Frederick' our father, if I were you, dear. He has always been a good old fellow to us, and if he is in a rage now, it is no use hardening your heart against him; he will come round in time."

"I don't care if he does or does not!" she replied, hotly. "I intend to marry Charlie, whatever he says!"

"Of course you do, old lady! I never doubted that for a minute. And as you are determined to have your own way, why should you be cross any longer? And now let us see what is best to be done. If I were you I

should go and meet Douglas at the station, take him for a quiet walk, and honestly tell him the truth, and I feel certain he is not the man to try and persuade you to care for him against your will; so run and get your hat before the pater catches you, for he is sure to come down presently, to see that you welcome our guest warmly, and then there will be another row; so be off at once, like a sensible girl!"

"Really, Percy! you must be mad to imagine I could, under the circumstances, go and meet Mr. McQueen!"

"Why not?"

"Yes, why not?" said a cheery voice at the window, and in another second, Douglas McQueen had entered the room.

Beryl coloured hotly; it annoyed her to think that he had heard any of their conversation; so, turning to him with flashing eyes, she said,—

"It is usual for visitors to go to the front door, Mr. McQueen, and not to come to open windows to listen to what people are talking about; but now you are here you can converse with Percy, as I have no time to spare," and, with a meaning look at her brother, she left the room, and, throwing a light shawl around her, she went out into the garden to rest under the shadow of an old beech tree.

When she had left the room, Douglas McQueen looked blankly at Percy Macnaughten; all the light had died out of his face, leaving him very pale and grave.

"Can you explain your sister's conduct?" he asked, coldly; "for she accused me of listening at the window, which is rather more than I can put up with, even from her."

"Indeed, I am awfully sorry it should have happened!" replied Percy, shaking his hand for the first time; "but don't take any notice of Beryl this morning, she has been rather upset. Come and sit down, and let us talk it over. The fact is, there has been some terrible misunderstanding."

"Do you mean to tell me she does not intend to marry me after all Sir Frederick said in his letter yesterday about her great love for me?"

"Yes, that is just it! It unfortunately happened that Beryl received a letter from Danvers, asking her to be his wife, by the same post as my father got yours, and he went to my sister and told her he had heard from someone who loved her very dearly, and desired her to guess who it was from, and Beryl, supposing Danvers had written to the pater as well as to herself, laughingly told him she knew all about it, as she had had a letter too."

"But surely Sir Frederick must have known I would not write to his daughter after my having told him I should not do so without his permission?" interrupted Douglas.

"Well," continued Percy, "he was very much surprised; but, thinking a lover's impatience would excuse the fact, he did not say much about it; and finding Beryl delighted on the subject, and having no suspicion of the truth, he left her, and wrote straight off to you. It never struck him that no name had been mentioned. So the same mail which took my father's letter to you, carried one from Beryl to Charles Danvers, accepting his offer; and it was not till this morning that the mistake was found out."

"And does your sister really love Danvers?" he asked, with an agitated voice.

"Yes, I fear she does," replied Percy, with feeling. "I am awfully sorry for you, old fellow! I knew you would take it to heart when I heard of it!"

"Don't think about me," he answered sadly. "It is Beryl we must consider. I fear Danvers is not the sort of man to make any girl a good husband, particularly a high-spirited little woman like your sister. I believe he will break her heart in a year. But I suppose she intends to marry him?"

"Yes, I am sure she does, for most people prefer to be miserable their own way, than happy someone else's; but she will never be

his wife with her father's consent, for he is quite determined she shall accept you."

"No," replied Douglas McQueen, firmly, "he must not force an engagement with me upon her, and I would never marry a girl who did not love me with her whole heart. I will tell Sir Frederick so when I see him, but I don't think I can meet him this morning. I feel quite unmanned for the time being. I shall be better presently, no doubt, and I will catch the first train up to town, and telegraph to say I am unable to come to-day; for the less said about this unfortunate matter the better, and I expect Sir Frederick is pretty warm about it at present. Let him cool down, and then we can talk it over quietly. Till then, remember, I am to know nothing—for it is of no use to upset Beryl more than she is already, poor girl! By-the-bye, where is she? I should like just a little talk with her before I leave. You need not fear, Percy," seeing him hesitate, "I will say nothing but what is kind to your sister. You can trust me, can't you?"

"Indeed, I can," said Percy Macnaughten, warmly shaking his hand. "You are a noble fellow, Douglas, and I only wish Beryl would accept you. I fear she will live to regret the day on which she married Danvers; but when she has once made up her mind there is no altering her decision. You will find her sitting under that old tree yonder, for I saw her there a short time ago; and now, if you don't want to meet my father, you had better slip out of that window, for I hear him coming down the stairs."

And just as Douglas McQueen made his disappearance, Sir Frederick entered the room.

"All by yourself, Percy? I made sure I heard you talking to someone. Where's Beryl?"

"How should I know, pater? She was talking to me a short time since, and I asked no questions when she left the room, for I think the less we bother her to-day the better."

"Perhaps so," replied Sir Frederick; "and now I want a telegram form. Can you give me one, as I have mislaid mine somehow? I am going to telegraph to that fellow Danvers, to tell him not to trouble himself to come down."

"I fear I can't give you a form, pater, but, if you like, I will go down to the office, and send a telegram off for you. It would save you the walk, wouldn't it?"

"Thank you," said Sir Frederick, coldly, "I prefer sending it off myself."

"Just as you like," replied Percy, indifferently. "But I thought you wanted to be at home when McQueen came down, and if he arrives by the train you told him, you would just miss him, and I think that would be such a pity."

"You are right, my boy!" said Sir Frederick, with an approving look at his son. "I am glad to see you so sensible. Go, by all means, and I will remain at home; and be quick back, as I wish to lunch punctually at one o'clock to-day."

Percy Macnaughten crossed the room, and suddenly he turned round and said,—

"I suppose you would have no objection to my taking Beryl on the river this afternoon? I think a little change would do her good, as she complains of a headache to-day; and we might take our tea with us, and return at nine, in time for supper."

"Certainly," replied Sir Frederick, quite taken off his guard by his son's innocent expression of face; "I am only too glad to give her a little amusement, for I fear she is rather upset to-day; but it cannot be helped. In this I will be obeyed!" and he drew himself up to his full height, and looked as if he meant what he said.

"All right; then that is settled?" said Percy, and in another second he had left the room.

"Poor old chap!" he thought; "it is rather a shame to take him in, but I have promised

Beryl to help her, so I will keep to my word," and he walked direct to the post-office, and sent off the following telegram:—

"From P. Macnaughten:—"Do not come to Fernbank, but meet us at Sunbury Lock at 8.30 this afternoon. Be punctual."

And having ordered it to be forwarded without delay, he wended his way homeward as quickly as possible, to have a word with his sister before she went into the house.

Beryl saw him coming across the meadow, and went to meet him with a bright smile.

"Oh, Percy!" she said, "Douglas has been so good to me; but I fear I have made him very miserable, poor old fellow. But he was so kind, and says he would not have me marry him against my will; and he is going to tell dad, after a little while, that he does not want me any longer, so he will get me out of my trouble, you see, and then it will end all right."

"Beryl, dear, the pater will never consent to your marrying Charles Danvers—and don't you think, little one, you could try and forget him? McQueen is a noble fellow, and would make you a good husband, and I feel sure you would never regret it if you chose him; and I feel equally sure you would soon be miserable if you married Danvers. He is not worthy of you, dear; do try and love Douglas instead!"

"I thought you were going to help me, Percy; but if you regret your promise to do so, I can manage without you," and she turned away from him.

"Come, Beryl, you are not going to get rid of me quite so easily," so laughingly slipping his arm through hers, he drew her towards him once more.

"Now tell me, old girl, are you sure you love Charlie with your whole heart and soul, and that you would rather take him, with all his faults, than a good man like Douglas?"

"Quite sure, Percy," she answered, earnestly. "I have loved Charlie from the very first day I saw him; he is my life, and if I lost him now I should die!"

"Stare! old lady! I am glad I've never had the complaint as bad as you. However, as you seem so certain, I will say no more about it, but just help you all I can; only remember, if you ever regret your choice, don't blame me afterwards."

"No fear of that," she replied, brightly. "When once I am Charlie's wife, he will be so good, and we shall both be as happy as the days are long."

"I hope so," replied her brother, gravely; and then he told her about the telegram he had sent off to her lover, and warned her not to seem too pleased about going on the river with him, in case Sir Frederick should suspect anything, "for if he does, old girl," he continued, "it would be 'all up,' and there would be a thundering storm;" and he laughed as he pictured what a "flare up" there would be.

"You are a dear boy!" cried Beryl. "How can I ever repay you for your goodness to me?" and she looked gratefully up in his face.

"That is just like you girls," he said, laughing still more. "Five minutes ago you were ready to declare what a brute I was, and now I expect you would swear anywhere that I am a perfect angel; but, I say, the pater is watching us from the drawing-room window; you must not look too jolly, or he will be suspecting me. At present I am the good boy in the story-book, and the longer he thinks so the better. Now, pull your face down a little; there, that will just do! so mild, and so pathetic! Keep on that expression and you would deceive the old gentleman himself. Upon my word, this is a joke! I only wish poor Douglas had not to suffer for it—it is hard lines on him."

"Yes," answered Beryl, "I am very sorry too, but I cannot help it now."

"Well, Percy," said Sir Frederick, eyeing his son keenly, "have you done as you promised me?"

"Yes, I think I sent a settler, pater. You may be pretty sure that young gentleman will not make his appearance here this afternoon."

"I am glad of it," said Sir Frederick quietly.

"Whom do you mean?" said Beryl, with pretended innocence.

"Why just this, dear," said Percy, gravely—"and you must try and bear the disappointment well—your father wished a telegram sent to Charles Danvers, to tell him not to come here to-day, and I have sent it; and if you are a very good girl, you are to be bawled to go on the river with me this afternoon; if you are naughty, you will be sent to your own room till you say you are sorry; so be sensible, and don't make a useless fuss about it."

During her brother's speech Beryl had kept her back to him and to her father, to prevent their seeing her face; but the tone of Percy Macnaughten's voice was too much for her, and she felt she must laugh, and began to shake violently; but she cleverly hid her face in her handkerchief, and pretending to sob, exclaimed that "it was too bad," when Sir Frederick stopped her by laying his hand on her shoulder, and said, not unkindly,—

"My dear, go to your own room till you can compose yourself; then change your dress, and come quietly down to luncheon, for I am expecting Mr. McQueen every minute, and I wish you to be ready to receive him," and leading his daughter to the door, they both passed out of the room, Beryl still in uncontrollable shakes, which her father took for deep emotion.

CHAPTER II.

A STOLEN MEETING.

WHEN Beryl came downstairs an hour later she found Sir Frederick pacing the drawing-room with a troubled expression upon his face.

"I have just received a telegram from Douglas McQueen," he said; "to tell me he is unable to come to-day."

"Really?" answered Beryl, indifferently. "It does not look as if he were very anxious to see us, does it?"

"I do not understand it," he replied, turning round and facing his daughter. "I hope you have had nothing to do with his non-appearance; it seems to me very peculiar, and I think I shall run up to town directly after lunch and ascertain the meaning of it."

"I certainly should not trouble Mr. McQueen if I were you, father; if he does not wish to come, leave him alone. I am very glad he is not coming, for it has saved another argument; and I hope you will write to him to-day, and explain the whole circumstances of the case, and then I am sure he will not press the matter further, for nothing would ever induce me to marry him; so now I think we had better drop the subject."

"The subject shall never be dropped until you promise to give up Danvers," he answered, hotly. "I would rather you remained single all your days than let you marry a scamp like that, and as to telling McQueen I shall do nothing of the sort, and I shall see that he comes down and makes everything straight with you before the end of the week."

"Will you?" she said; "I think not;" but she could add no more, for at that moment the majestic butler announced that luncheon was ready, and put an end to the conversation.

At half-past three Percy Macnaughten and his sister arrived at Sunbury Lock, and found Charles Danvers waiting for them—and very handsome he looked, standing on the bank in his spotless flannels, which showed his tall, manly figure off well; his slightly-waved gold brown hair, and long, soft moustache suited his style, and the expression of his sparkling blue eyes, as he met Beryl's, denoted intense devotion and love.

There were few women who could resist Charles Danvers when he chose to fascinate them; and it was not to be wondered at that

Beryl had succumbed to his charms, especially as he really *did* love her with all the warmth of his passionate nature; and at the present time she was his idol, and he cared to worship at no other shrine.

He quickly jumped into the boat and sat down beside Beryl, pressing her hand with great tenderness.

"It was good of you, darling, to arrange this nice little trip for us. I was thinking this morning how lovely it would be on the water to-day," and he slipped his arm through her's and drew her close to his side.

"It was not *my* thought, it was Percy's," she said, looking brightly up at him.

"Oh! was it? How are you, old boy? I forgot I had not spoken to you."

"Well! I was beginning to think you were a pretty cool hand, but I suppose I must forgive you, under the present circumstances. But look here you lazy beggar, don't you imagine I am going to pull you all the time, while you sit there and enjoy yourself, so come and make yourself useful. Besides, we shall have everyone looking at us if you sit so close to Beryl as all that. Come along now, and about two miles ahead there's a lovely, quiet, little nook I know of, and we will go up there, and then I will make myself scarce, for I know you are longing to throw me overboard to get me out of the way; but I won't bother you much when once we cast anchor, so let us be quick." And, having persuaded Charles Danvers to take a pair of sculls they soon arrived at their destination, and, springing lightly up the bank, Percy laughingly bade them adieu.

"I shall be back again at eight o'clock, Beryl," he said; "and I hope you will have a happy time. But please remember, whatever you settle to do tell me as little as possible, as the less I know the better; but mind what I said to you coming along, decide nothing in a hurry," and with a parting wave he left them.

"What does he mean, pet?" asked Charles Danvers, turning to Beryl with marked astonishment in his face.

"I have much to tell you, Charlie," she said, looking timidly up at him.

"Come and sit down, and we will have a long chat." And having settled themselves comfortably at the bottom of the boat, and put up a large umbrella to shelter them, regardless of their being in a perfectly shady nook, Beryl told him her story from beginning to end. She kept back nothing from her lover, feeling it was best he should know all; even that she should lose her home and expected fortune if she became his wife.

Charles Danvers' face clouded visibly when he learnt that Beryl would bring no gift to his mill. He was decidedly a poor man, and had very extravagant habits, and he had hoped that Sir Frederick Macnaughten would make his daughter a liberal allowance, and it was a great disappointment to him to find that she would have nothing. But with Beryl at his side gazing up at him with her pathetic, hazel eyes, he could think of little else than his present love for her, and drawing her closer to him he kissed her passionately.

"My brave darling!" he whispered; "how much you have borne for my sake. Never mind, sweet one, when once you are my wife you will not regret your old home, will you, pet?" he asked, tenderly; "and I expect when your father sees you are quite determined, he will rather forgive you than lose you altogether. Don't you think so?" he questioned.

"No, Charlie, my father does not easily forgive, but I can bear even his displeasure for your sake. But are you quite sure you will still care to marry me without a penny? Sir Frederick said you would not."

"Did he, Beryl? Well I will prove he was wrong. When do you become of age, dear?"

"This day month," she answered. "What made you ask, Charlie?"

"Cannot you guess, sweet?" he replied, earnestly. "No? Well, I will tell you. On

the day you are twenty-one your father will have no legal right to dictate to you. And on that day, my pet, I must make you my wife."

Beryl trembled as she heard his words. She loved Charles Danvers with her whole heart, but she loved her father too, and she did not wish to give him the pain of parting from her at so near a date; so she pleaded with her lover to give her more time. But he would take no refusal, and listening to his soft, passionate, love-words, she soon forgot all but the man by her side, and drawn to him by his inexpressible tenderness, she laid her head at last upon his breast, and murmured,—

"As you will."

And thus they remained for hours, almost too happy for words, feeling and knowing nothing save the great love that filled their hearts, contented with the bliss of the day, without one thought of the pain the future to-morrow would bring.

When the neighbouring clock struck eight Percy Macnaughten stood beside the boat.

They had not heard his footsteps on the moss-grown bank, so they were still hidden under the convenient umbrella, when he stopped. And they started when they heard his cheery voice by their side.

"Well, I'm blest!" he exclaimed. "You two do look jolly comfortable. It makes me feel inclined to institute a partnership umbrella myself. But, I say, time is up, and we must be precious quick, or we shall be late for supper, and that would never do. I suppose you have had your tea or whatever you call it—all that cake and stuff we brought out with us?"

"No, we have not," replied Beryl, laughing; "we never thought of it. What shall we do? We must not take it home again, and there's no time to eat it now."

"No, there's not," Percy answered. "I wish there were, for I am as hungry as a hunter, but I'll tell you what we will do with it; there are some children up yonder who would be glad of it, poor little beggars!" And, taking up the basket of provisions he was quickly out of sight; and when he returned Beryl and Charles Danvers were ready to start, and they were soon on their way homewards, rowing swiftly down the stream till they arrived at the lock. And there the young lovers had once more to part. So whispering to Beryl to keep up bravely for his sake, and thanking Percy for his kindness towards them, Charles Danvers sprang lightly ashore, and wended his way towards the station.

"Well, old girl?" said Percy Macnaughten to his sister, "I hope you will be happy; you certainly looked so this evening when I came back to you. I can only say I trust it will last."

"Oh! yes," replied Beryl, looking up brightly. "We have had a glorious day, thanks to you, dear; but what has happened to you, Percy? Why, you are wet through! Surely you have not been in the river with your clothes on, by way of amusing yourself?"

"That is just what I have been doing," answered Percy, with a hearty laugh. "Beryl, you must congratulate me, for this afternoon I have met the prettiest little girl I ever saw, and I believe she is as good as she looks."

"What do you mean?" asked Beryl, with astonishment. "I do not see what your meeting a pretty girl has to do with your being wet."

"Everything, old lady; because the first thing I saw of my little fairy was that she was having anything but a good time of it, in the middle of the stream; and I had the pleasure of landing my fish without any trouble to myself, as it matters not to me whether I have to swim in or out of my belongings."

"Oh, Percy! how good you are!" exclaimed his sister, with an admiring look at

him. "And who is this girl? and what was she doing by herself on the river?"

"She was not by herself, dear, but with her sister, who had gone on shore to get some lemonade at the little farmhouse close by; and when she was alone my little friend let the boat drift out into the stream, and never saw a steam launch coming up behind her till it was too late to get out of its way, and somehow she was upset, but she is all right now."

"But when did you first see her?" questioned Beryl, eagerly.

"I? Oh, I heard the people shouting at her, and looked round just in time to see her go over, poor little soul; and fortunately they swung the launch quickly round, and I just managed to prevent her being drawn under, and when I got on shore I took her to her sister and made her drink some hot brandy and water; then, finding they lived about two miles distant, I escorted them home at a brisk rate, and to-morrow morning, if you feel inclined to accompany me to Weybridge, we will drive over to inquire for her; if not I will go alone, for I have no mind to lose sight of my queen just as I have found her."

"Indeed, I should like to go with you, dear, and if I can help you in any way I shall be only too glad; but you have not told me who her people are. Will they welcome us, do you think?"

"Oh, yes, that's all right," replied Percy Macnaughten, brightly. "They have no relations, poor girls, except an old uncle and aunt with whom they are living, and I told the old lady I should drive over with you to-morrow to inquire for my little fairy, and she said she would be pleased to see us."

"And what is her name," asked Beryl, with interest.

"Viola Sinclare, and her sister is called Mabel, and you must try and like her, dear, for my sake."

"Indeed I will, dear boy," said Beryl, earnestly. "Viola is a pretty name, and I hope she will prove worthy of you. Why, here is dad coming to meet us!" and in another minute they were by Sir Frederick's side.

CHAPTER III.

SAVED FROM RUIN.

EARLY next morning Beryl and her brother ordered their little village cart and drove over to Weybridge, arriving at the residence of Captain Sinclare about eleven o'clock.

They found Viola waiting for them in the garden, and very pretty she looked in her soft blue nun's veiling dress, relieved only by some rich Honiton lace at the neck and sleeves.

"How good of you to come!" she said, looking at Percy Macnaughten with a bright light in her eyes, which told their own tale. "And is this your sister you talked to me about yesterday? Oh! I am so pleased to make your acquaintance, for after all Mr. Macnaughten said of you I feel as if we were quite old friends already;" and she pressed Beryl's hand warmly. "And now come in, for auntie is quite anxious to see you."

And having shown her into a prettily furnished drawing-room, she gave the necessary introductions, and leaving Beryl to talk to Mrs. Sinclare, she went out to summon the groom to hold the pony and relieve Percy Macnaughten of his charge.

For some time they walked about the garden, and before their chat was ended Percy had very plainly intimated to his little fairy that he hoped when they knew each other better they should be more than friends; and Viola, blushing very red, had accepted his proffered hand and had gently answered that "she hoped so too."

At this juncture Mabel Sinclare joined them, and said she had heard her aunt asking her servant where they were gone; so she

had run out to meet them, that they might all go in together.

Percy gave her a grateful glance, and Viola telling her she was a dear, slipped her arm through her sister's, and they all walked towards the house.

"Oh, there you are!" said Mrs. Sinclare. "I did not know you were out too, Mabel. I do not want you all to come in, but I was afraid Viola might feel the sun too hot for her, as she had no hat on; and I fear she has, for her face looks flushed. Do you feel at all giddy from the heat, my dear?"

"Not in the least," replied Viola, smiling; and turning round to Percy she gave him a mischievous look.

The visit passed very pleasantly; and Beryl took a great fancy to the two girls, and asked Mrs. Sinclare to let them come over to see her the following week, saying that Sir Frederick would be only too pleased to welcome any friends of hers, and would, she was sure, do himself the pleasure of calling on Captain Sinclare very shortly, as he remembered he had known him some years ago when they had travelled together on the Continent; and he had no idea they were now such near neighbours.

At that moment Captain Sinclare entered the room, and seemed highly pleased at the prospect of meeting his old friend again; and said he should not wait for Sir Frederick's visit, but should drive over the following day and see him.

"Then why not all come?" said Beryl, good-naturedly. "We shall expect you in the morning, and you must stay to lunch."

And so it was settled, and Beryl and her brother bade their new-found friends goodbye. And "Dot," tired of waiting, started off at a fast trot; so they soon came in sight of their lodge gates.

Sir Frederick seemed very pleased at the arrangement Beryl and Percy had made, and the next day he remained at home to give his old chum a hearty welcome; and the day was a very pleasant one for them all. Percy seemed never tired of showing Viola some new object of interest, and the old people looked on and smiled.

"My dear," said Captain Sinclare to his wife that night, "Viola would be a lucky girl if she won Percy Macnaughten, for he is the nicest young fellow I have met for a long time; and, of course, he will be his father's heir. And if the old chap is as rich as he used to be he will come in for something considerable."

"Rich or poor, I would welcome him into our home if he made our darling happy," returned Mrs. Sinclare, kindly. "We already owe him a debt of gratitude we can never repay; for but for his goodness we should have been in sad trouble now."

"Yes, yes!" replied the old man; "we do owe him a great deal. And if Vi loves him I will not say him nay. And, after all, money is not everything; and should he be poor, little Vi has enough for them both."

A week afterwards Beryl received a letter from Douglas MacQueen, to say he intended to run down and spend a few hours with them, as Sir Frederick had twice written to invite him, and he could find no reasonable excuse for remaining any longer away. He wrote her a fine, manly letter, promising to be a true friend to her if ever she needed his assistance, and, in return, he only asked her to be the same to him as she used to be before he unfortunately wrote to her father, assuring her he would never again ask for her love in any way, and ended by saying that at some future date he would tell Sir Frederick that he no longer desired to marry her; but he could not do so quite yet, as it would only get her into further trouble with him. So in the meantime she had better let things take their course, and that he hoped soon to make it all right for her.

Beryl was very pleased with his kindness, and ran down to tell her father that Douglas

MacQueen was coming to see them with such a smiling face that the old man quite thought she intended giving way to his wishes, so he took her in his arms and kissed her affectionately, telling her how much he regretted his harshness to her, and asked her to forgive and forget the past.

"Dear old father," she answered, gently, "I fear you have far more to forgive than I have," and to hide the tears which were beginning to fall she quickly left the room.

When Mr. MacQueen was announced Beryl was sitting alone in the drawing-room; she was thankful Sir Frederick was not with her to watch their meeting, and when he at last joined them they were chatting away quite merrily, and the old man gave a sigh of relief as if he felt one trouble at least was off his mind.

After lunch, Beryl said she had promised to drive over with "Dot" to fetch Percy home from Weybridge, and asked Douglas MacQueen if he would mind her leaving him, adding she had promised Percy she would go for him before she had received his letter; and having gained her release she quickly got her hat, and jumping into the little cart she disappeared down the drive, waving her handkerchief to her father, who had come out to see her start.

As he re-entered the hall he was joined by Douglas MacQueen, and noticed for the first time how pale and ill he looked.

"Are you not well?" he questioned, regarding him keenly.

"Yes, I am all right, thank you," replied Douglas, with a forced smile; "I never look very bright in the summer, the heat is too much for me."

"Well, then, come and rest a little in my study, and keep quiet until the sun gets lower; then you will be able to return to town in the cool of the evening," and Sir Frederick turned to lead the way.

"I shall be very pleased to stay a short time longer if you will have me, but I must catch the four o'clock train back, as I have an appointment at five, but I am only too glad to chat with you till it is time to go to the station," and having gained the study they settled themselves down in two easy chairs to talk over a subject which was troubling the minds of them both.

"Douglas," said Sir Frederick, earnestly; "I know you are a thorough man of business, and I want to ask your advice. I was in town yesterday, and learnt to my dismay that the company I invested nearly all my money in some time ago is in a very shaky condition. Is there any truth in the report?"

"Oh! I should not make myself uneasy about that," said Douglas MacQueen, evasively. "How much have you in it?"

"Fifteen thousand pounds."

"Really! Why, what made you put so many eggs into one basket, Sir Frederick? Did the ten per cent. interest tempt you?"

"Yes, that was just it," replied the old man, wearily; "perhaps you do not know my past trouble. I will tell it you:—"

"About twelve years ago I lost my eldest son, a fine, handsome fellow of twenty-five, but as reckless as could be, and I regret to say that I let him have his own way so long that at last I had no authority over him whatever; and he went from one extravagance to another, and at last ended his life by a fall from his horse, while he was riding a steeple-chase. He lingered a week, poor boy, and I never left his side once. He was only conscious a few hours during that time, and then he confessed to me what a terrible state his affairs were in, and I promised him that I would settle them all for him, and strove to turn his attention to higher and better things, and I have the comfort of believing he died in peace."

"When the funeral was over I gave notice to my son's creditors that I would be answerable for his debts, but I little thought to what extent I should be called upon to pay, for I found that thirty thousand pounds would only just cover them. However, I had promised my dying son that his name should be cleared

from all stain, and I felt bound to keep my word."

"At that time I was tolerably well off, and had forty-five thousand invested in consols, and I felt the only thing I could do was to sell the greater part of it out, which I did. Twenty-five thousand I paid down to the various creditors, and promised to pay the other five thousand later on."

"I had only left five thousand in consols, and the fifteen thousand I still had in hand. I invested in the Firefly Company, which seemed in a flourishing condition, and was paying ten per cent. interest."

"Of course this helped me a great deal; but my troubles did not end there, for my poor wife's health was so shattered by our sorrow that she required constant change of air and scene, and I had to take her abroad every year for five years, but all to no purpose. I spared no expense in endeavouring to make her better, and had all the best medical advice in the country, but with no good result; and she died, poor darling! quite suddenly at last, while we were spending our winter in the south of France, and I had to come back to my home alone. But I could not bear my solitary grandeur, so I, fortunately, was able to get rid of the end of my lease of the beautiful house I had lived in since I first took my dear wife home to me in Scotland; and desiring to have a complete change, I came to England to be near my children, who were both at school in the metropolis, and taking a fancy to this place, which I saw advertised, I engaged it at once, and have lived here ever since."

"When Beryl was sixteen I had her home, and life became brighter for me. I then sent Percy to Oxford, where he remained till last Christmas, and since then I have been so glad to have him with me that I have not urged his seeking any employment. But I suppose an idle life is not good for him, and he will have to make a start soon."

"But to return to business. You can now understand why I invested so much in the Firefly; and I am thankful to say at the present time I don't owe a single penny to any man beyond the ordinary monthly bills. But if that company were to smash I should be well-nigh ruined, so I want you to tell me what I had better do."

"It is a limited company, is it not?" said Douglas MacQueen, thoughtfully.

"Yes; I am thankful to say it is," replied Sir Frederick.

"Well, look here!" said Douglas, brightly. "Don't you bother yourself any more about it; depend upon it, it is as safe as a house; and to prove to you that I think so I will tell you I intend to invest a good round sum in it myself."

"You surely cannot mean what you say?" said Sir Frederick, incredulously. "Surely you have too much sense to jump into a sinking ship?"

"But suppose I intend to jump into it?" said Douglas; "and I assure you I consider it quite safe enough for me. After all, what you have heard is only a report, only just a little smoke, which will probably end in nothing serious."

"I don't believe there can be smoke without fire behind it," replied Sir Frederick. "Of course you can please yourself, and put your money in if you like; but I intend to take mine out as quickly as possible."

"Do you?" returned Douglas, with a smile lurking about his mouth. "Well, then, suppose you transfer your fifteen thousand to my name, and I will give you a cheque for the amount at once? It will save you a deal of trouble, and me too."

And he took his cheque-book from his pocket, and drew the pen and ink towards him to write out the amount.

Sir Frederick rose and went to his side, and laying his hand on MacQueen's shoulder, he looked earnestly into his face,—

"Douglas," he said, "are you sure you have thought this matter well over, or are you

adopting this course to save me from ruin? If so, I will not allow you to do it. I would prefer drawing my own money out of the company, and then you can please yourself about investing yours."

But Douglas McQueen would do nothing but laugh at the old man's fears, and told him he had fully made up his mind for some time past to invest a few thousands in the Firefly Company, and he might as well do it now as later on, adding that even if he *did* lose it, it would make but a very small hole in his pocket, and having written out the cheque he handed it to Sir Frederick; and before he left he made him promise to come up early the next day and give the necessary signatures for the transfer.

The next morning Douglas McQueen called upon his lawyer and warned him not to mention to Sir Frederick the rickety state of the Firefly Company; so when the old man went to the office he was made perfectly comfortable on the subject, and having settled his business with Douglas McQueen, he went to his stockbrokers and gave orders for the investment of the fifteen thousand in Consols, and wended his way home with a lighter heart than he had felt for some time.

He understood very little about business of any kind—he simply knew what he was told. He certainly had felt most uncomfortable about the Firefly for a long time past, and was thankful to be out of it, but he believed what Douglas McQueen had said about its safety, saying—

"He ought to know; especially as he had insisted on the transfer, and if he lost the money now, it was not because he had not warned him of the risk."

He felt some regret that his dividends would in future be so comparatively small, but he knew he had no heavy calls upon his purse now, so he made up his mind to be content. When Douglas McQueen had said good-bye to Sir Frederick he gave a sigh of relief.

"Poor old man!" he said, half aloud. I am glad to have spared him that trouble for Beryl's sake and his own. I can ill afford to lose the money just now, but if I draw in my horns a little I shall be all right again in a year or two. No, it would have been useless for him to have tried to sell out his shares—no one would have bought them. I only wonder the smash has been delayed so long; but I am thankful I have been in time to save him!"

CHAPTER IV.

A SECRET MARRIAGE.

Beryl awoke on the morning of her birthday with a racking, nervous headache, and she longed to lie quietly in her comfortable little bed for some hours longer, but it could not be, for she had no time to waste, as she had promised Charles Danvers to be at St. George's Church at half-past eleven.

They had had many happy meetings on the river since that day month, and on each occasion Percy had left them to enjoy themselves together, and had spent his day with his little fairy as he called Viola Sinclair; and very happy were those too, for Percy had lost no time in securing his prize, and the engagement had given great satisfaction to all parties concerned.

Sir Frederick was charmed with his son's choice, and decided that Percy was not to seek any employment, but have an early marriage and travel about for a while, to show Viola some of the curiosities and beauties of the world before settling down.

Beryl quite envied them their quiet happiness, and the congratulations that were sent to them from friends far and near, made her wish that they had a few kindly words for her too.

But this was her wedding-day, and there was not one person to wish her joy, and her heart sank within her, and she almost regretted the step she had taken.

But it was too late to draw back now, so she hastily dressed herself, and went down to breakfast, and she found on the table waiting for her a letter addressed in her father's handwriting.

He had written her a few loving words of birthday greeting, and had enclosed her a beautiful ring of diamonds and rubies. He told her he had kept it for her ever since her poor mother died, as it had been his first gift to her when they became engaged, and he felt sure she would value it for her dead mother's sake; and he asked her to follow her example in all ways, for she was a good and true woman, and through her life he had never seen one fault in her.

He ended his letter by saying he regretted not being able to wait to see her, but he had learnt that morning that the Firefly Company had completely smashed, and he was anxious so catch Douglas McQueen before he left his rooms to condole with him upon his loss; but, he added, he did not intend to be late home, and if possible he should bring Douglas back with him to dinner.

Tears were blinding Beryl's eyes as she read her father's letter, so full of tender affection and kindly advice, and, sinking into an easy-chair, she cried as if her heart would break.

"Why, old lady! whatever is the matter with you?" cried Percy, as he entered the room, and going to his sister's side he placed his arm fondly round her.

"Oh! Percy! Percy!" she sobbed. "My mother! If she were only here to-day!"

"Poor little woman!" he answered, tenderly. "I often long for her, too, dear girl; but try and cheer up, for the day you have become twenty-one tears ought to be out of the question. And now—look here!—do you like this?" and he handed her a beautiful morocco purse bound in gold.

"Oh! it is lovely!" she answered, and opening it she discovered a twenty-pound note in one of the pockets. "Oh! you can't afford to give me such a handsome present, Percy, dear," she cried, joyfully. "Let me have the purse—that is splendid; but take the note back again."

"Nonsense, dear!" he replied. "It is none too much to give you. You are the dearest little woman in the world next to Vi, and there's nothing too good for you!" and, kissing her affectionately, he led her to the breakfast-table.

But neither Beryl nor Percy seemed inclined to partake of the good things spread before them, and they soon after left the room. Percy had intended to invite his sister to drive over with him to spend the day with Viola and Mabel, and great was his astonishment when he had ordered the pony to discover that she was nowhere to be found, and his wonder increased when he learnt from one of the gardeners that he had seen Miss Beryl a short time since turn down the lane, in the direction of the station, carrying in her hand a small black bag.

* * * * *

The wedding was over, and Beryl and Charles Danvers left St. George's Church man and wife!

They intended to spend a few days in London and enjoy themselves, then they meant to seek for a small cottage in the country, and settle down in as quiet a way as possible, for Charles Danvers had only two hundred a year, while he unfortunately possessed the tastes of a man of some thousands; but he told himself that now he was married he intended to turn over a new leaf. However, for a week, at least, he and Beryl must have a jolly time of it, so he had engaged two rooms at the Langham Hotel, having saved up what he imagined their holiday would cost him.

After the service was concluded Charles Danvers hailed a "hansom" and drove with his bride to the hotel, and having gained their own apartment he took her tenderly in his arms, and kissed her fondly.

"My own sweet wife!" he said, passionately.

"You are mine at last, my darling, and nothing on earth can part us now!"

Just then the door opened, and Sir Frederick Macnaughten entered the room, accompanied by Douglas McQueen.

They had been quietly sauntering down the street when Beryl and Charles Danvers had alighted from the hansom, and had seen them pass into the hotel. Sir Frederick's wrath knew no bounds, and he had insisted upon following them, although Douglas had done his utmost to detain him, guessing how their engagement had terminated; but, finding his arguments unavailing, he determined to accompany the old man, and try to make matters as smooth for Beryl as possible.

"You scoundrel!" exclaimed Sir Frederick, white with rage, "how dare you seek my daughter, when I wrote and forbade you ever seeing her again? And as for you, Beryl, I am ashamed of you!" and he pulled her roughly from Charles Danvers' embrace.

"Stay, Sir Frederick," answered the young man, coolly. "Your daughter is now of age, and you have no longer any legal right to dictate to her, and in future I must request, if you honour us with your society, that you will be more choice both in your manner and language. Beryl is now my wife, and I decline to allow her to be treated in such a rough fashion."

"Your wife!" gasped the old man; "then, indeed, I need wish her no greater punishment for the way in which she has deceived me. Beryl," he continued, "from this time forward you and I are strangers. You shall never enter my house again!" and he turned to leave the room.

"Sir Frederick," said Douglas McQueen, laying a detaining hand on his arm, "you must not part with Beryl so. No, no! I cannot let you go!" as the old man tried to push past him. "Sir Frederick, do listen to me! You had a wedding-day once. Think of it. This is Beryl's. Do not let it pass without her receiving her father's blessing. Yes, I know she has disobeyed you, but see how sad she looks! Let me plead for your forgiveness, and ask you for my sake, and for her own, not to part from her in anger!"

Sir Frederick looked at Douglas McQueen in astonishment.

"What!" he said. "Can you plead for her pardon after the way she has deceived you?"

"Beryl has done me no wrong," he answered, sadly. "You may think badly of me, Sir Frederick, if I tell you the truth, but you had better know it. This very day I had intended telling you I no longer desired to marry your daughter. I found we were not exactly suited to one another, and perhaps I have treated her coldly, and feeling unhappy has doubtless made her take the step she has done; but it is too late to alter anything now, and all I ask is, that you two may be once more reconciled; and if there is any blame to bear you must just put it all on me."

He looked earnestly into Sir Frederick's eyes, and waited for him to speak.

"Douglas," he said, "I confess you have astonished me. I certainly thought you at least were a man to know your own mind, and I am disappointed to find you are not. However, it is one sin off Beryl's shoulders. She, at any rate, has caused you no suffering, and it is fortunate it is so. As for the rest, it is my affair, and not yours, so we will end the conversation." And again he turned to leave the room.

"Beryl, Beryl!" said Douglas McQueen, "do not let your father go like this!"

And he once more prevented the departure of Sir Frederick, and, taking Beryl's hand, he drew her to the old man's side.

"Oh, Sir Frederick," he pleaded, "forgive, as we all hope to be forgiven! Beryl has done wrong, but she is sorry. See how she is weeping! Ask him yourself, Beryl, before it is too late. If you part in anger now who knows what to-morrow might bring?"

"Father, dear father, forgive me!" she

said, between her sobs, and she clung to him as if her heart were breaking.

Sir Frederick's lips began to quiver, and he trembled in every limb.

"Oh, my child! my child!" he answered, "you have well nigh broken your father's heart; but, yes, I will forgive you, and I hope you will be happy!" and he stooped and kissed her brow.

"Sir Frederick," said Charles Danvers, "I regret my words to you just now, and I trust you will forget them. Believe me it is my love for Beryl that made me take the course I have done, for I felt sure you would never give your consent to our union. I know I am not worthy of her; but I will do my best to make her happy. Will you shake hands with me, and forgive the past?"

"Oh, do, dear father," entreated Beryl. "You have forgiven me—forgive Charlie also."

"Well, well," said the old man, wearily, "make her a good husband, Danvers, and I will forgive you also," and he took his son-in-law's hand in his.

"Thank Heaven," said Douglas McQueen, earnestly. "Sir Frederick! will you give me your hand, too. I know I have annoyed you, but you are too old a friend to lose."

"Yes, my boy, we will let the past be forgotten. I do feel disappointed in you, but we will talk no more about it. I could not bear to part with you. Douglas, for I love you as my own son; and now I think we had better say good-bye to these young people."

"Beryl, what is your future address? You had better give it to me."

"We don't know it?" replied Beryl. "We have not yet decided where we are going."

"Surely it is rather a bad beginning," said Sir Frederick, turning to his son-in-law.

"I am afraid it is," answered Charles Danvers. "But the fact is, we must live wherever we can find a cottage to suit us within our means—beggars cannot be choosers, you see," and he laughed uneasily.

"Beryl," said Douglas McQueen, earnestly, "you could grant me a great favour if you only would. I have a pretty little place near Ham Common that sadly wants looking after. Would you mind living there, and taking care of it for me?"

"You are too kind, Douglas," she replied, "but we must not accept such a liberal offer—you might want to go and live there yourself."

"Well, if ever I do, I will let you know, till then I shall be really glad if you will occupy the little place; so we will consider the matter settled. Come, Danvers, you will not let your wife refuse me, will you?"

"Not I," returned he, laughing. "I know your little box well, and it is a perfect little gem, and I am awfully grateful to you for your kind thought."

"Don't mention it," said Douglas McQueen. "It is a mutual obligation, I assure you; but there is one thing more I want you to do for me," he continued, turning to Beryl. "I want you to let my faithful old nurse, Dora, live with you, for she always expects me to find her a home somewhere. She is a useful old woman, and I don't think you will find her in the way."

"I shall be only too pleased," said Beryl, brightly, "and I cannot thank you enough for all your goodness to us."

"I have done but little for you," he answered, sadly, "I only pray you may be happy; Charlie and I have been friends since boyhood, and I believe, if well managed, he may make a good husband. And now good-bye," and he pressed her hand gently. "Remember I will always be your friend," and in another second he had left the room.

Sir Frederick and Charles Danvers had been talking together, and had neither seen or heard the parting, so they were very much surprised to see Beryl standing beside them alone.

"Why, where's McQueen?" asked Sir Frederick.

"He has gone, dear father," she answered. "I fancy he was in a hurry to catch his train."

Sir Frederick looked at his watch.

"And so am I," replied the old man, "and if I remain here any longer I shall lose it. Good-bye, my child, may Heaven bless you, and make you happy. Good-bye, Danvers; I hope you will take care of her. Beryl has cheered my lonely life so long I shall miss her sadly, but if she is contented with you I will not complain," and with a parting wave to them both he was gone.

When Douglas McQueen left the Langham Hotel he went straight to the station, and made his way down to Ham by the first available train.

Old Dora welcomed him gladly, but her face fell as she listened to his words.

"Not coming to live here, sir?" she said, "when you have had everything done up so beautiful?"

"No, Dora," he replied. "I find I am obliged to go abroad for a time to look after my affairs a little, and I want you to grant me a favour. Will you do what I ask you?"

"Did you ever ask me to do a thing I didn't say 'yes' to?" she answered.

"Perhaps not," he replied, smiling at her; "and I don't think you will refuse me now. I have let my house to some great friends of mine—and my friend's wife is very delicate—and I want you to do all you can for her, to make her happy and comfortable. Will you, Dora?"

"Yes, that I will," replied the old woman, warmly, "though I am mortal disappointed you are not coming to live here yourself."

"Well, I can't just now, Dora, but if you take great care of my friends I will come back to you some day, and now good-bye. Be sure not to mention to Mr. Danvers that I had intended to live here myself."

And having paid his old nurse six months' wages in advance he took his leave of her; then returned to London, and having made his arrangements to start in three days' time for the Cape, he went to his rooms to prepare for his departure.

"I cannot stay here," he murmured. "My brain feels on fire! A few more scenes like to-day's would kill me! Oh! Beryl, my darling! you little know how I love you!"

CHAPTER V.

A FALSE SUSPICION.

THREE years have passed since Beryl's wedding, and she has changed from a bright, *espiègle* girl into a quiet, thoughtful woman. Her pathetic eyes look more pathetic than ever, but she is never heard to complain, so she is considered happy by her general acquaintance.

But if Beryl has altered Charles Danvers has done so more. The gentle, tender manner, which was his peculiar charm, has long since left him, and he has become selfish and exacting; and, to make things worse for Beryl, he is intensely jealous of her. She must go nowhere, and see no one unless he is with her; and Beryl, considering it was a lack of confidence on her husband's part, resented his constant supervision, and thus a coldness sprang up between them.

They both saw the wall of reserve getting higher and higher every day, but each one imagined the other should give way first; and thus days passed into weeks, and the girl who had sacrificed so much for love taught herself to believe her husband no longer cared for her; while Charles Danvers, noticing his wife's quiet, subdued manner, thought she regretted her marriage with him, and became cold with her in consequence.

So the love-light left his eyes, and he no longer guided her with gentleness; thus we find Beryl three years after her marriage an apparently unloved, an unloving wife.

Percy Macnaughten has been more fortunate

than his sister. He and little Vi are as happy as the days are long. They have now been two years married, and are still travelling about, enjoying themselves; but promise to return to England the following summer, and settle down near the old people, and take care of them in their declining years.

Mabel Sinclair's lot has been less happily cast than that of Viola, and had it not been for Beryl she would have been sad at heart indeed, as Captain Sinclair had made up his mind that she should marry a wealthy merchant, who had proposed for her hand, and very irate was he when his niece quietly but firmly refused the offer of the millionaire.

All his arguments, however, failed, so the subject had to be dismissed; but from that time Mabel felt that her presence was no longer cared for at her uncle's home. In vain Mrs. Sinclair tried to smooth matters over between them; but her husband, an old sea captain, so long accustomed to the strict naval discipline of the service, considered *his* word should still be law to all he had to deal with, so that he could not, or would not, forgive the disobedience of his niece; and when a few months after he found Mabel encircled in the arms of a handsome young officer, whose only gold was upon his uniform, his indignation was overpowering, and with anything but polite language he ordered Egbert Hamilton out of the house, and dared him ever to enter it again.

It was useless for Mabel to entreat, or for Egbert to remonstrate. Captain Sinclair was obdurate, and there was nothing for Egbert Hamilton to do but to depart, and, pressing Mabel's hand warmly, he told her he would ever love and be true to her, and begging her to keep up a brave heart, he left the room and the house.

Mabel was not of age, so she could not defy her guardian openly, for she and Viola had been left under his protection by their father's will, and they were to have no power over their own fortunes until they were twenty-one, unless they married with the consent and sanction of Captain Sinclair before that age; and then he was to see their money was properly settled upon them; but should either marry without his permission they were to forfeit their money entirely.

Of this Mabel was well aware, and feeling it would be useless to discuss the matter any further she quitted the apartment without another word, leaving her uncle alone, and passing out into the garden she sought refuge in the summer-house, and sunk into a chair to think over the situation.

What was she to do?

It would be fruitless to say anything more to Captain Sinclair, for he would only now be more determined than ever to keep her from the man she loved, and the question which so greatly troubled her was how was she to meet him without her uncle's knowledge?

Who could she get to help her?

And at last the answer came, for the servant, having discovered her place of retreat, told her that Mrs. Danvers was waiting to see her in the drawing-room.

Beryl Danvers! Yes, she would ask her to assist her in her difficulty, and, rising with a lighter heart, she ran in, and gave her friend a loving welcome.

Beryl listened to Mabel's story with a sad face, it reminded her of the days when she had defied her father, and had given up all for love; and the thought of how it had ended made the tears glisten in her eyes, while she pressed her hands nervously together.

But this was no time to think of herself, for Mabel had ceased speaking, and was waiting for her reply.

"Mabel, dear," she said, at length, "are you quite, quite sure you love Mr. Hamilton with your whole heart? And, above all, are you certain that he really loves you? Or may it not be a fascination he has for you—a passing fancy—a passionate longing to possess you, which would only be strengthened by obstacles standing in the way? Oh! Mabel,

have you considered the subject well? If not, go no further till you have in some way proved his truth, for if he does not *really* love you he will soon weary of your society, and, after the excitement of winning you is over, and there is nothing left to fight for, he will not hesitate to show you that he considers you rather a burden to him than otherwise."

"Beryl, don't talk like that!" said Mabel Sinclair, placing her arm around her waist. "I have no doubt about Egbert's love; I have already proved that, and have found him as true as steel; so now I want you to let me see him sometimes at your pretty little home. And as uncle is sure to watch me continually, and I shall never get a chance of running out to meet the postman—as I have no wish for my letters to fall into Captain Sinclair's possession—I hope you will let Egbert direct his letters to you, and you can forward them to me in another envelope; do you understand, you dear old thing?"

"Yes, I perfectly understand, Mabel; and if you are quite determined I will help you all I possibly can; but don't you think Charlie would imagine there was 'something up' if he chanced to see a letter arrive at our house directed to you? He is very peculiar in these days, and he might take it into his head to let Captain Sinclair know."

"But, you dear old pet, I have no intention of having them directed to me, they must be directed to *you*; so, if he did see one arrive, it would not matter, and you could pretend it was a circular, or anything else you like, so don't make any more difficulties, or I shall think you want to get off helping me."

"No, do not suppose that," said Beryl, kindly. "I will do all you wish, dear girl! And now let me see Mrs. Sinclair, and make arrangements for you to come and stay with me next week, and then you can see Mr. Hamilton as often as you like, for Charlie is going down to Yorkshire to stay with his people for a few days, and the coast will be clear for you both. What do you say to that, Mabel?"

"I say you are a perfect darling!" and, throwing her arms around Beryl's neck, she kissed her warmly, and then ran out of the room to find her aunt.

The following Monday Mabel arrived at Gorselands, the home of Beryl Danvers, and Egbert Hamilton joined them in the afternoon, and spent the rest of the day with them, and, having hired a bedroom in the village for a week, he was able to spend the whole of his time with his little love instead of wasting a good portion of his day in the railway carriage running backwards and forwards to Aldershot, where his friends were now living, to be near him while he was quartered there.

But all good things come to an end in time, and Beryl received a letter from her husband to say he intended returning home the following day, and she hastened to tell the news to her visitors; and Mabel, not wishing that Charles Danvers should meet her lover, thought it would be better to say good-bye to him that evening, and let him take an early train to Aldershot the next morning, and thanking Beryl for her kindness he left the house.

And the next day Mabel returned to her uncle's home, leaving Beryl to welcome her husband back alone.

The change did not seem to have improved Charles Danvers, and to his wife he was colder and sterner than before.

Rumours had reached him of a handsome young fellow having been constantly at his house during his absence, and he determined to watch Beryl more closely than ever.

He questioned her as to whom she had had to visit her while he was away, and she told him that Mabel Sinclair had been staying with her, and then changed the subject, and no more could he discover from her; and her very reticence upon the matter made him more suspicious than ever. But although he kept a close guard over her, he could find not

the least fault with her, and had almost dismissed the subject from his mind, until one day he saw her slip a letter into her pocket directly she had received it from the postman.

She coloured as she saw her husband by her side, but handed him his despatches, and passed on quickly to the drawing-room.

"Beryl," he said, questioning, as he followed her in, "had you no letters this morning?" and stepping back he took her by the shoulder and held her, looking into her eyes to learn the truth.

She flushed still more beneath his steadfast gaze, and tried to shake off his hand, but in vain.

"No," she replied, "there were no letters for me."

"Beryl!" he said, sternly, "how can you tell me what is not true? I saw you put a letter into your pocket, and I insist upon knowing who it is from—so tell me at once."

"I have answered you already, Charlie—if you did not believe me the first time you would not the second, so be good enough to let me go," and releasing herself with an effort she passed out without another word.

But Charles Danvers was not thus easily to be silenced—so he followed his wife into the dining-room, and endeavoured to force her into giving him an explanation of her conduct, but with no satisfactory result.

Had he been gentle with Beryl she might perhaps have told him enough to pacify his doubts, without letting him know who she was really assisting—but he was rough to her. He began by asserting that she had told him an untruth, and thus offended her pride.

She felt indignant that he should disbelieve her word, and she told him so, with an angry glitter in her eyes. But he had seen her place a letter in her pocket, and if there was no harm in it, why did she look so confused when he had taxed her with it? And thus thinking Beryl was deceiving him he grew more determined and irritable each minute, and high words arose between them—till at last, finding his wife obdurate, Charles Danvers rushed from the room, with the very demon of jealousy gnawing in his breast.

When Beryl found herself alone she cried as if her very heart would break.

"Oh! Charlie, Charlie!" she exclaimed, "how can you doubt me? Oh! my love, my love! you will kill me if you treat me like this much longer, but you have ceased to care for me now; and I—I will let you think in future that I utterly despise you," and turning to her davenport she found a large envelope and began to direct it, but before she had finished doing so Mabel Sinclair entered the room.

"A letter for me!" she exclaimed, joyfully. "Oh! I am so glad—you are a dear old soul to send me on so many. Uncle was only saying yesterday, he could not imagine what you had to say to me so often, and that you must spend half your day in letter-writing. But what is the matter to-day, Beryl, dear? You are not looking at all yourself."

"I am all right," she replied, smiling up at Mabel's happy face. "I have a headache, that is all. And now I know you are dying to see the contents of that envelope, so I will run and tell old Dora what I want for dinner, and then I will come back to you."

When Beryl returned to her friend, she found Mabel in a high state of excitement.

"Oh, Beryl!" she said, with a trembling voice. "What am I to do? Egbert says he cannot live any longer without me, and he does not care a bit if I have no money, as an aunt of his has just died, and left him a comfortable income; and he has made up his mind that he won't consult uncle about our marriage, as he behaved so badly to him the last time he saw him; and so I am to ask you if you will let me be married from your house next month. What do you say to that, Beryl?"

"That I shall be only too pleased to see you happy, dear Mabel," she replied; "and you can tell Mr. Hamilton I shall be very glad to perform the part of a mother to you on the grand occasion, and if he can find no one better I

will give you away myself, and I shall expect you to spend the necessary three weeks with me before the event comes off. And now would you not like to sit down and write your letter to him here, in the quiet? I will not disturb you."

"I am sure of that, dear!" Mabel replied. "Oh, Beryl! what should I have done without you? You are, indeed, a good friend to me."

And sitting down at the davenport she began to write; but first of all she re-read her lover's letter.

"Beryl," she said, presently, "here is a little piece I did not see before, and it seems to me that it is of no use my writing to Egbert to-day, because I don't know where to direct my letter. This is what he says:—

"I am going up to town this evening, and I feel I must see you, if only for an hour, just to talk about our future plans; so, darling, meet me at the Park gate at three o'clock to-morrow, and we will have a little walk. I will not go to Gorselands, in case that fellow Danvers should be at home; so mind you are punctual, as I want to catch the 4.36 train back again."

"Now, is not that tiresome? Beryl, dear, you will have to meet him instead of me, as it is impossible for me to get away to-morrow, for uncle has made arrangements to take some friends up the river, and he told me a week ago that I was not to make any engagements for that day, and I dare not disobey him, if I hope to be allowed to come and stay with you next week; so you must just meet him for me, like the dear old thing you are, and explain to him how matters stand; and I can give you a little note to take to him for me." You don't mind, do you?" seeing Beryl hesitate.

"I am sorry, dear Mabel, you cannot meet Mr. Hamilton yourself," she answered; "but I think I can manage it for you, as Charlie is going to London to-morrow for the day, so I am not likely to be watched; therefore write your note, little woman, and we will consider the matter settled."

"How can I ever thank you, dear?" said Mabel, gratefully, and having finished her letter, she gave it into Beryl's charge.

In the afternoon Beryl walked part of the way back with Mabel to keep her company, and during her absence Charles Danvers, who had been out ever since the stormy scene with his wife in the morning, returned home in a gloomy mood.

He was still determined on finding out who his wife's mysterious correspondent was, and for that purpose he went to the dining-room expecting to find Beryl there at her needle-work, but found the apartment empty, and was about to ring for Dora to inquire where her mistress was, when a small piece of paper lying half under the table attracted his attention, and having a great objection to see anything out of place, he stooped and picked it up, and laid it on the davenport.

He had no intention of reading its contents until he noticed his own name, and then, feeling curious to know what it was about, he took it up again, and read it from the beginning to the end, and his face grew pale with passion, as he discovered what he supposed to be his wife's faithlessness towards him.

This, then, was Beryl's secret!

She loved him not, but another; no wonder she had defied him in the morning, for how could she tell him, her husband, that she was carrying on an intrigue with another man, who, at that very moment was urging her to leave him, and find her happiness elsewhere.

No! there could be no mistake now. Had he not the villain's letter in his hand? and he re-read the words again:—

"I am going to town this evening, and I feel I must see you if only for an hour, just to talk about our future plans; so, darling, meet me at the Park gate at three o'clock to-morrow, and we will have a little walk."

"Good heavens! had it come to that?" and Charles Danvers became giddy at the thought, and leant against a chair for support. He

could read no more of it—he must not waste time—he must act in some way at once; but what should he do?

Should he go straight to Beryl and tell her what he had discovered?

No! she had defied him in the morning, and she would do the same this afternoon.

He would wait and watch, and whoever the scoundrel was he should not go unpunished.

He knew now why Beryl had become so cold to him of late. Of course she loved another, and was willing to sacrifice all—even honour—for that other's sake.

And as Charles Danvers thought of it the hot blood surged through his temples, and his brain became on fire.

"I'll shoot him like a dog!" he muttered between his set teeth, and with that resolution he left the room; and meeting Dora in the passage he told her to inform her mistress he should not be home till to-morrow night, and quitting the house he walked hurriedly towards the station, heeding nothing in his way.

His hands are clenched, his mouth is firmly set. He only knows, now it is too late, that he loves his wife madly, and she is faithless to him.

When Beryl returned home two hours later she found a telegram awaiting her, and opening it, she read the following words:—

"Richmond Hospital. There has been a terrible accident. Mr. Danvers seriously injured. Come at once."

"Oh! Dora!" she cried, "Mr. Danvers is seriously injured, and if he should die I could never be happy again."

"Oh, don't talk so, my dear!" replied the kind old nurse, affectionately; "and don't cry, for tears do no one any good. Where is poor master?—at the Richmond Hospital? Well, then, if I were you I would lose no time in getting there, and I will run and fetch you a fly, as you will drive there quicker far than if you wait for the next train."

And the good old woman ran to the nearest livery stables, and quickly returned with the vehicle, and a few minutes later Beryl was on her way to Richmond.

When she arrived at the hospital the house surgeon came to meet her, and led her into a private room, and told her her husband had met with his accident by crossing the line at Richmond Station, instead of going over the foot bridge, as he ought to have done. He had not noticed a train which was coming up behind him, so he had been knocked down and fearfully injured.

"Is there any hope of his recovery?" asked Beryl, trembling in every limb.

"While there is life there is always hope, Mrs. Danvers," answered the doctor, kindly; "but your husband's is a very serious accident, and I much fear he will never get up again."

"Cannot I take him home to nurse him myself?" asked Beryl, with tears flowing fast.

"No," replied the doctor, "he must not be moved; but rest assured our nurses will do all that can be done to make him comfortable. And now, if you wish to see Mr. Danvers, I will take you to him, but, remember, he must be kept perfectly quiet; any excitement might be fatal to him," and he led Beryl to her husband's bedside.

Charles Danvers lingered for three days, and during that time he had told Beryl about the finding of that scrap of letter, and asked her to explain its meaning to him; and she, knowing it could not injure Mabel Sinclair to impart her secret to her dying husband, told him the whole story from beginning to end, and when she had finished he drew her gently to him.

"Oh! Beryl, my darling!" he murmured, "can you ever forgive me for doubting you? Oh! my wife! my wife! you little know how I have loved you; but my mad, jealous temper has ruined my life and yours. Say you forgive me, precious one, and kiss me once more before I die!"

And Beryl, placing her arms around him affectionately, assured him she had nothing to forgive, and told him it had been her own fault that they had ever had any misunderstanding; and thus the husband and wife were fully reconciled, and shortly after he fell asleep, and so passed away—and the smile that illumined his face in death, gave hope that he had found peace at last.

CHAPTER VI.

A HAVEN OF REST.

WHEN Sir Frederick Macnaughten heard of his daughter's trouble, he lost no time in going to her. He attended to all the funeral arrangements, and thus spared her a great deal of care and anxiety, which otherwise must have been forced upon her; and when all was over he persuaded her to return at once to her old home.

Dora did not at all like to part from her young mistress, but when she looked at Beryl's pale, sad face, she felt it would be for her good to have a thorough change, and she would not let her even stay to make such arrangements as were necessary before leaving the house, undertaking herself to set all in order, and forward to Beryl by carrier, the few things that were her own personal property.

Sir Frederick wrote to Douglas McQueen and told him of his daughter's loss, and Beryl enclosed a short note, thanking him for his great kindness in having let her, and her late husband, live in his charming little residence for so long a time, and telling him she had now returned to her old home, and that Dora was once more taking care of Gorselands alone; and in return she received a kind letter of condolence from him, and he ended by saying that he intended remaining abroad for some months longer, but that when he returned to England, he would lose no time in running down to see her and her father.

Beryl did not forget Mabel Sinclair even in her great sorrow, and had left her husband for a few minutes to meet Egbert Hamilton—not at the Park gate, but at the railway station—where she had delivered to him Mabel's letter; and having promised him to do all she could for them both at a future date, she had quickly returned to the hospital.

And now that she was settled at her father's house, she once more sent for Mabel and her lover to come and see her; and during that visit she had talked quietly and seriously to them, and tried to persuade Egbert to endeavour to gain the consent of Captain Sinclair to their marriage.

"You see, dear," she said to Mabel, "I cannot now be having a wedding from my house; first, because of my recent sad loss, and, secondly, because I have now no home of my own; and, after all, you would be happier if you married with your uncle's sanction. He and Mrs. Sinclair have been for many years like parents to you, and I feel sure you would be grieved to say good-bye to them altogether—would you not?"

"Yes," answered Mabel, "I should be sorry to break with the dear old people entirely; but it would be useless to ask uncle again, for, having once refused his consent, he would never relent."

"Perhaps if I asked him," said Beryl, "he would alter his decision. I have often heard that very few men can refuse the request of a young widow, and I should like to try my influence in this case. What do you say to my suggestion, Mr. Hamilton?"

"That if you are successful I shall be more than grateful to you, Mrs. Danvers; and I really don't believe Captain Sinclair could say 'No' to you."

"Very well, then," said Beryl, "I will try this afternoon. We will all drive over together, and you shall wait in the meadows until the battle is over. If I am successful I shall take you in, in triumph; if not, I shall no longer put any obstacles in your way, and you must be married by special license, as poor Charlie and I were."

And she smiled a sweet, sad smile.

There is little more to be said about Mabel Sinclair and Egbert Hamilton.

Beryl had a long interview with Captain Sinclair, and at first the case seemed to be hopeless—but the little widow was indeed an importunate one, and when she returned to her father's house, she laughingly told him, "Captain Sinclair was thankful to give his consent at last, if it was only to get rid of her."

And very soon after that, the church bells were to be heard pealing merrily for a wedding, and there were not a happier pair to be found than Mr. and Mrs. Egbert Hamilton!

A year has passed away, and Beryl is still her father's constant companion.

The bygone trouble has long since been forgotten by the old man, and he seems more devoted to his child than ever.

It is now June, and the little widow is sitting in a listless attitude in a pretty easy-chair in Sir Frederick's drawing-room, thinking of the past; and she does not hear the door open.

In another moment the fine manly form of Douglas McQueen stands before her, and she starts to her feet, while a look of half pleasure and half surprise comes over her face.

"Beryl," he asked gently, "are you pleased to see me?"

"Truly pleased," she answered, giving him a warm hand-clasp.

"Then you will no longer wish to send me away!—will you, dear?"

Beryl did not reply to him, but her eyes drooped beneath his steadfast gaze, and the hand he still held trembled nervously.

"Beryl, my darling," he continued, "you must know how greatly I have ever loved you. Indeed I believe I could make you happy if you would only let me. Answer me, my sweet, and tell me you will be my wife. Surely, dearest, you must love me just a little!"

"Douglas," said Beryl, in an agitated voice, "you know my past history—you know also how I loved Charlie, and I must tell you truly that I can never love like that again. But you have ever been so kind and good to me that I cannot deny any longer that I have a true and deep affection for you. Will that satisfy you, dear?" and she looked questioningly into his eyes.

"My darling!" he replied earnestly, "I will take what love you can give me now, and I shall hope before long to bear you say that you love me with your whole heart;" and taking her in his arms he kissed her fondly, and a feeling of great peace filled her heart, as she laid her weary little head confidently on his breast.

One year more, and Beryl's time of mourning is over, and she has become the happy wife of Douglas McQueen.

And Sir Frederick is no longer left alone, for he stays six months of the year with Beryl, and the other half with his son Percy and little Vi, who have now settled down; and it would be difficult to say which of his children makes him the most welcome.

[THE END.]

WHERE THE ORANGE BLOSSOMS GO.—The perfumery manufactories at Nice and Cannes annually crush and squeeze no less than one hundred and fifty-four thousand pounds of orange blossoms. With these figures to consider, it is not surprising that Italy is no longer, as in olden times, the great power of the Continent. Its orange blossoms are wasted. Put into weddings, these orange blossoms would represent at a least four hundred and sixty-two thousand marriages a year, involving, as things go, an average increase of over one hundred thousand annually to the population in addition to the present rate. Italy would have a great future before her were all her orange blossoms put to their legitimate use.

FACETIÆ.

It makes envy sore to see intellect soar.

EYES are not eyes when cigar-smokes makes them water.

THE man who was kicked out of a seaside resort was caught by the under toe.

SIZES ain't everything. A watch ticking can be heard farther than a bed ticking.

HINT FOR WINTER.—How to keep your rooms warm—keep your grates coal'd.

WHEN a woman smiles from ear to ear it's mean to say her mouth goes back on her.

A PIECE of steel is a good deal like a man—when you get it red-hot it loses its temper.

WHEN does a farmer act with great rudeness towards his corn? When he pulls its ears.

A MAN who had a scolding wife, being asked what he did for a living, replied that he "kept a hot house."

THE boy who bit into a green apple remarked with a wry face, "Twas ever thus in childhood—sour."

It is curious that when a dog chases his tail, his tail, which is certainly behind, should always keep a little ahead.

A MAN must look up and be hopeful, particularly when he is trying to drink from a jug.

WE can at least feel grateful that Eve didn't wear eye-glasses and call Adam "Chawles."

WHAT is the difference between a belle and a cowboy? The more powder she uses the less dangerous she becomes, while the cowboy becomes rather more so.

"RETIRED from the Stock Exchange? Given up your business? What's the matter, old fellow?" "Dead broke; couldn't be broker you see."

"You told me, Arthur, that your doctor advised you to drink whisky. Has it done you any good?" "Well, I should say so. I got a barrel of it two weeks ago, and I could hardly lift it; and now I can carry it about the room."

THE man who cheerfully gives up his seat in a road-car to a woman who has neither youth nor beauty to thank him with, is making a big bid for a reserved seat in heaven; but the woman who accepts a seat, and scornfully neglects to thank the donor for it, is likely to hang to the straps in the great future.

CAPTAIN BANGS: "I always understood that Jones was shot in the discharge of his duty." PRIVATE BANGS: "Well, some say that he was shot in the sutler's shop, and others say he was shot in the leg; but he got his pension for nervous prostration, brought on by dodging the provost-marshal."

YOUNG GENIUS (who has had all the talk to himself, and, as usual, all about himself): "Well, good-bye, dear Mrs. Meltham! It always does me good to come and see you. I had such a headache when I came, and now I've quite lost it." MRS. MELTHAM: "Oh, it's not lost. I've got it."

"I say, waiter!" shouted the impatient gentleman, "do you know that you remind one of the millennium—you're such a long time coming?" "I beg your pardon, sir," replied the polite attendant, "but you also remind me of something, to wit, the Golden Eagle—such a distance between tips, you know." The matter was straightway settled by arbitration.

BURDETTE relates this allegory; but he adds, soberly, "This was long ago." One evening Diogenes was sitting in the theatre, sadly contemplating a feminine hat as big as a poultry yard, which it very much resembled. "I wish I had a club," he said, in his pathetic way. "I would like to hit that woman a good crack on—!" He hesitated. "The thing she carries her brains in?" suggested his friend. "Ah, no," replied the cynic. "The thing she wears her hat on."

"A miss is as good as a mile," but Mrs. is as good as a league.

A WOMAN refused to "shoo" her hens because her husband, a shoemaker, was on strike.

WHEN the young writer reads the reviews of his first work, he often finds it is a geyed book instead of a novel.

"LOVE is blind." True, true. The young man never sees the dog until it is too late to escape in a dignified manner.

"BLESSED be nothing; you can't lose it," as the tramp said, when he climbed over the garden wall, with the bulldog's nose where his (the tramp's) coat-tails ought to have been.

BREAD AND BOARD.—"This paper," says a German professor, "has discovered a way to make good, nutritious bread out of wood." "Pshaw! there's nothing curious about that." "Nothing curious? Why, just think of it—good, nourishing food from wood." "Certainly; the poorest kind of board, you know, contains bread."

IT WOULD BE SWEET.—Guest: "Let me have some smelt." Waiter: "We have no smelt. But we have salt fish fried." Guest: "I want smelt." Waiter: "Excuse me, sir. The salt fish fried will be smelt as much as anything you can get here."

HE SAW THE CAMEL.—"So you enjoyed your visit to the circus did you?" inquired young Sillabub of his adored one's little sister. "Oh, yes; and do you know we saw a camel there that screwed its mouth and eyes awfully, and sister said it looked exactly as you do when you are reciting poetry at your church festivals."

A TRUTHFUL MOUTH.—"I believe you. I know your mouth never utters a lie," replied Birdie McGinnis. "Thank you," said Miss Esmeralda Longcollin. "Do you know why your mouth never utters a lie?" asked Birdie. "No." "Because you talk through your nose." And now there is a coolness between the two.

A SCOTCH dominie, after relating to his scholars the story of Ananias and Sapphira, asked them "why God did not strike everybody dead who told a lie." After a long silence one little fellow got to his feet and exclaimed, "Because, sir, there wadna be ony-body left."

AN ORIGINAL CHARACTER.

A JUSTICE of the Peace was trying a man for obtaining money under false pretences by making untruthful statements concerning a horse he had sold. A rather severe sentence was passed, and the prisoner said, "Judge, that sentence is unjust."

"That sentence won't be changed; not to any very great extent; not if the Court knows itself!" thundered the justice.

"But there was alleviating and extenuating circumstances in connection."

"Why didn't you state 'em before?"

"The Court didn't give me no chance."

"It is the opinion of the Court that the Court had something to do with this trial—please ante up yer fine here 'fore I sock five dollars onter you for contempt o' Court."

"But just let me explain. You know I told the man that the horse was only six years old and wouldn't balk. Well, you see, it was the sor'l horse you traded me, and I took your word for all this."

"Hey! Was it the one I shoved onter yer last week?"

"That's what it was, Judge."

"And you didn't say nothing wuss than that he'd pull, and was a colt?"

"That's all, yer Honour."

"Well, this makes the case entirely different—circumstances alter cases. I don't see as you said any more than was necessary to unload the horse. I'll remit the fine, and discharge you on yer own recognisance. Ef you and the jury'll come out, you may intergate at the expense av the Court."—*American Paper.*

MISTRESS: "How is this, Baptiste? How can you allow the butcher to give you such a bad piece of beef? It is nothing but bone." BAPTISTE: "Just what I told the butcher, madam. I said if it was for myself I would not have it."

CUSTOMER: "Isn't it a trifle large, Levi?" LEVI: "Larch, mine fren! S'help me gracious! ef you keeps dot shpring goat on, unt your vife sees it, your bosom vill schwell mit pride no dot she'll hef to set dem buttons forwards."

"I WONDER what makes this chicken so tough?" observed Fangle, at the dinner-table yesterday. "I'm sure it ought not to be," replied Mrs. Fangle, "for it is one of our young Plymouth Rock pullets." "A Plymouth Rock pullet, is it? No wonder it is so hard; I can't get my teeth through it."

MISS KEENE: "Why, Mr. Broadbent, what has caused this change in your appearance?" MR. B.: "I presume it's my glasses, doncher know? I've begun to wear them." MISS K.: "Well, you should always wear them. You've no idea how intelligent they make you look. I scarcely knew you."

"PAPA, when we enter heaven do we not march through the pearly gates?" "Yes, my son." "And each gate is made of one big, solid pearl?" "Yes, my son." "Where do the oysters grow that contain such big pearls?" Papa (angrily): "Where's my whip, you young scamp?"

STRANGER (to country shopkeeper): "Can you tell me where I can find James Holt, who wrote this recommendation for Coffin's consumption cure? He lives here, I believe." Merchant: "He did before—!" Stranger: "Before what?" Merchant: "Before he died of consumption."

SCENE—Scotch court-house. Sheriff: "Now, my good man, tell me the value of your dog—I mean what your dog was worth—that I may assess the damages." Old Farmer (speaking with great deliberation): "Weel, my lord, the dog wadna worth anything; but, jist for him shooting it I will mak' him pay the full value o't."

A CITIZEN stopped into a chemist's, and called for a couple of pills, which he swallowed. "How much?" he asked. "A shilling, sir." "A shilling! Why, the chemist down the street never charged me more than three-pence." "Then I'll make 'em twopence. I'll drive that man out of business if I have to sell goods at cost!"

"WHAT kept you so late last night, Archibald?" demanded Mrs. Spotsash. "Takin' inventory," replied Spotsash. "I knowed it!" she replied; "smelled it on your breath the minute you came in. You'll keep on takin' it till you get yourself in the lock up and disgrace your family, and then I hope you'll be satisfied."

SUMMER-RESORT hotels are putting on big adjectives and otherwise getting ready for the season. Mosenbaum, who keeps the "Boudoir," was taken to task for stretching his advertisement too much. "Hi, there! Mose!" said a friend, "I see you advertise that your rooms have been enlarged." "So dey haf." "But there have been no carpenters at work on your place." "No. Wait till I tole you. I haf scraped der paper off dem walls. See!"

"I've been digging over my garden," said Brown, "and I'm all worn out." "Ah!" remarked Fogg: "a new variety of earthen wear, eh?" Fenderson, who was present, thought it was a mighty good joke, and seeing Smith a short time afterwards, of course he had to tell it. "I say, Smith," said he, "Fogg just got off a neat thing. Brown was saying he was all worn out digging in his garden, and Fogg asked him if that wasn't a new kind of crockery ware. What do you think of that?" "I don't see the point." "Darned if I do either, now! But I thought I did when Fogg told it."

SOCIETY.

THE PRINCESS OF WALES and her three daughters were present on Saturday, May 29th, at the trooping of the colours on the Horse Guards' Parade, viewing the ceremony from the balcony in the Horse Guards' Tower. They were accompanied by the Prince and Princess of Wales, and the Prince gave a speech in the evening—a good day's work.

THE PRINCESS OF WALES is credited with great ability in her duties, as representative of the Duke of Braganza's family in the most satisfactory manner. She is of by all and at the review of the troops with the King and Queen, she day his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, the British Legation, and a deputation of the House of Commons were presented to her.

THE engagement of Princess Louise of Wales to Prince Oscar of Sweden, a temporary, affords a fair example of how royal marriages are made. The young people are practically strangers to each other; certainly neither has had the opportunity of testing the disposition of the other, and the affection that prompts a certain man to cleave to a certain woman is left out of the question altogether. This is not at all as it should be, but the rumour is not generally credited.

PRINCESS LOUISE, who perhaps entertains less than any member of the Royal Family, gave a garden-party recently at Kensington Palace, where she and her husband occupy some rooms, as do several other presumably needy couples. The Princess would possibly regard the obligations of her position differently but for her husband.

LADY THERESA BOYLE has given a charming dance at the Countess of Cottenham's residence at Queen's gate. Lady Cottenham was attired in black lace, much trimmed with jet; a white feather in the hair, and jet ornaments. Miss Boyle looked extremely well in white tulle, the skirt made with silk panels edged with pearls, the silk bodice being trimmed with pearl-spotted tulle; trails of narcissus were prettily arranged about the dress, and a few were fastened in the hair; she wore pearl ornaments, and held a bouquet of narcissus.

The Countess of Strathmore was in mauve broché, and Lady Constance Lyon wore pale blue tulle; the Countess of Lovelace wore pale pink satin draped with old point lace, the front of her dress being of pale flowered satin.

Princess Sultane Malcom wore pink satin; Viscountess Dalrymple white net and satin, trimmed with old gold lace; and Lady Goldsmid pale blue satin, with front of pink flowered brocade; diamond stars and pink flowers in the hair.

At the Whitehall, was very recently the Countess of Dalhousie. Her dress was of a delicate shade of peach, the front of the gown being of white satin.

The Duchess of Westminster's black dress was thickly threaded with gold; the Duchess of Bedford wore black, with a pale mauve feather in the hair, diamond tiara, and other ornaments; Lady Elia Russell was in pale pink satin, handsomely embroidered; the Countess of Seafield, ruby velvet train lined with pink satin, over a petticoat of pink brocade, and splendid diamonds.

Madame de Staal, grey and pink flowered satin looped over a skirt of ruby velvet; the Countess Sondes, black; Lady Lily Milles, white satin; the Countess of Strathmore, grey broché velvet trimmed with steel; Lady Rossmore, white brocade and pearls; Viscountess Galway, pale grey brocade; the Countess of Lathom, golden brocade; Lady Wantage, black, trimmed with silver and beautiful diamonds; and Hon. Mrs. Balfour, navy blue velvet and satin.

STATISTICS.

NATIONAL DEBTS.—The prevailing opinion that the public debt of England is larger than the national debt of any other country is an erroneous one. At the end of the year 1885 the English debt was £740,000,000 (in round numbers). In 1883 the national debt in France, reckoned in English money, was £942,000,000, and is now about £1,200,000,000. In spite of the endeavours of the present French ministry to check the colonial "jingo" policy the public debt is still increasing.

CIRCUSES.—The largest circus in Paris accommodates only 7,000 people, while one in ancient Rome could hold over 150,000, where from 100 to 400 lions were let loose at a time. Augustus filled the arena once with 3,500 wild animals, and one Probus got up a free fight between 1,000 wild boars, 1,000 stags, 1,000 rams, and 1,000 ostriches, and the occupants of the upper galleries—the gods—had the right to shoot arrows and javelins into the *melée*.

GEMS.

LET a woman do what she can, not because she is a woman, but because she is one of God's creatures.

IDLENESS is the hotbed of temptation, the cradle of disease, the waster of time, the canker-worm of felicity.

EVERY man's life lies within the present, for the past is spent and done with, and the future is uncertain.

SIMPLICITY, of all things, is the hardest to be copied, and ease is only to be acquired with the greatest labour.

GOOD men have the fewest fears. He has but one who fears to do wrong. He has a thousand who has overcome that one.

THERE is a better than the great man who is always speaking, and that is the great man who only speaks when he has a great word to say.

As no single man is born with the right of controlling the opinions of all the rest, so the world has no title to demand the whole time of any particular person.

EVERY man must patiently bide his time. He must wait—not in listless idleness—but in constant, steady, cheerful endeavours, always willing and fulfilling and accomplishing his task, that, when the occasion comes, he may be equal to the occasion.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

COLD rice left over from one breakfast makes a very good dish for next morning, either in the form of rice balls patted up in the form of potato balls, or in omelets. A rice omelet should be made with two eggs to a cup of cold boiled rice, and care should be taken that it is served very hot.

CREAM PIE.—Three eggs, one cup sugar, one teaspoonful cream tartar, one cup flower, one-half teaspoonful soda, two tablespoonfuls milk, one-half tablespoonful lemon flavouring; beat the yolks of eggs with the sugar, dissolve soda in milk, stir cream tartar in flour, add whites beaten stiff last of all.

TO KEEP CUT FLOWERS FRESH.—In the evening lay them in a shallow pan or bowl with their stems in a very little water, and cover the receptacle with a damp towel, one just wrung out of water. In the morning the flowers can be arranged in vases for the day. The stems can be slightly cut from day to day. Flowers treated in this manner can be kept from one to two weeks and sometimes even longer.

MISCELLANEOUS.

A MERRY and contented spirit goes far towards the production of that happiness which is lasting and conducive to health. Where an absence of happiness exists, the physical and mental health of the individual must suffer. A want of happiness may be consequent upon various causes, some of which are beyond our control; but, except in cases of incurable physical or mental suffering, our happiness and the number of our healthful days are very much within our own grasp.

EGYPTIAN CLEANLINESS.—The higher and middle class of Egyptian Moslems are very clean. Their religion compels them to wash themselves frequently and so preserve their health; but the foreigner will see in the streets of Cairo a richly dressed and veiled lady, whose person is as clean as frequent bathing can make it, leading by the hand a little child with a face besmeared with dirt, and with its clothes looking as if they had not been washed for months. The reason for this strange inconsistency is that an unwashed and shabbily-dressed child is believed to be less liable to the evil eye. Another inconsistency is that an Egyptian will go again and again to the bath in the same dirty shirt. He will wash himself thoroughly and then put on the same dirty shirt, because his ideas of cleanliness do not extend to his linen.

MENTAL power grows in harmony with thought and study just as long as the proper limits are observed. With wise exercise the reason grows clearer, the imagination richer, the insight quicker, the judgment more accurate. But, if these limits are overstepped, if the mind be overworked and overstrained, it loses what it has been at so much pains to gain. Our wisest educators have long since given up the notion that the more knowledge that can be crammed into the mind the stronger it will grow, and are now largely engaged in the task of selection and on the problem of gauging the limits beyond which knowledge ceases to be power.

A SAGE PRECEPT.—An ancient Arabian philosopher said:—"My son, go not out of the house in the morning till thou hast eaten something; by so doing thy mind will be more firm; and shouldst thou be insulted by any person, thou wilt find thyself more disposed to suffer patiently; for hunger dries up and disorders the brain." Hunger diminishes the bodily strength, thus irritating and enfeebling the mind. If study has to be done in the dark winter mornings, have the room warm and some light food prepared for the student. Irritability is often the result of hunger. Some persons, who are naturally amiable, will become disagreeable snarlers when they are hungry. A dear old lady once used to say that in the course of her life she had always traced every feeling of irritability to hunger. The instant she felt the slightest inclination to be dissatisfied with matters and things she had something to eat, and thus averted disagreeable results.

HOME-MADE CASES FOR CUTLERY.—For knives, cut a piece of coloured canton flannel the width that can be conveniently hung on the china-closet door. Measure about twice and a half the length of your knives, and hem both edges. Double it up from the bottom nearly as deep as a knife and stitch in rows about an inch apart, or so that a knife will slip in easily. If that makes more places than you wish for knives you can make some of the spaces two inches apart to put in tablespoons. Sew three or four brass or steel rings to the top, and screw into the door as many brass or steel hooks such as you can purchase at any ironmonger's, and hang it up. Make a case for forks in same way only not quite as deep. One made of drab canton flannel, herring-boned across the hems with red, is very pretty, and does not easily become soiled. Another may be made of unbleached canton flannel, ornamented with a vine worked with blue embroidery cotton.

FACETIE.

It makes envy sore to see intellect soar.

EYES are not eyes when cigar-smokes makes them water.

THE man who was kicked out of a seaside resort was caught by the under toe.

SIZE ain't everything. A watch ticking can be heard farther than a bed ticking.

HINT FOR WINTER.—How to keep your rooms warm—keep your grates coal'd.

WHEN a woman smiles from ear to ear it's mean to say her mouth goes back on her.

A PIECE of steel is a good deal like a man—when you get it red-hot it loses its temper.

WHEN does a farmer act with great rudeness towards his corn? When he pulls its ears.

A MAN who had a scolding wife, being asked what he did for a living, replied that he "kept a hot house."

THE boy who bit into a green apple remarked with a wry face, "Twas ever thus in childhood—sour."

IT is curious that when a dog chases his tail, his tail, which is certainly behind, should always keep a little ahead.

A MAN must look up and be hopeful, particularly when he is trying to drink from a jug.

WE can at least feel grateful that Eve didn't wear eye-glasses and call Adam "Chawles."

WHAT is the difference between a belle and a cowboy? The more powder she uses the less dangerous she becomes, while the cowboy becomes rather more so.

"RETURNED from the Stock Exchange? Given up your business? What's the matter, old fellow?" "Dead broke; couldn't be broker you see."

"You told me, Arthur, that your doctor advised you to drink whisky. Has it done you any good?" "Well, I should say so. I got a barrel of it two weeks ago, and I could hardly lift it; and now I can carry it about the room."

THE man who cheerfully gives up his seat in a road-car to a woman who has neither youth nor beauty to thank him with, is making a big bid for a reserved seat in heaven; but the woman who accepts a seat, and scornfully neglects to thank the donor for it, is likely to hang to the straps in the great future.

CAPTAIN BANGS: "I always understood that Jones was shot in the discharge of his duty." Private Bangs: "Well, some say that he was shot in the sutler's shop, and others say he was shot in the leg; but he got his pension for nervous prostration, brought on by dodging the provost-marshal."

YOUNG GENIUS (who has had all the talk to himself, and, as usual, all about himself): "Well, good-bye, dear Mrs. Meltham! It always does me good to come and see you. I had such a headache when I came, and now I've quite lost it." Mrs. Meltham: "Oh, it's not lost. I've got it."

"I say, waiter!" shouted the impatient gentleman, "do you know that you remind one of the millennium—you're such a long time coming?" "I beg your pardon, sir," replied the polite attendant, "but you also remind me of something, to wit, the Golden Eagle—such a distance between tips, you know." The master was straightway settled by arbitration.

BURDETTE relates this allegory; but he adds, soberly, "This was long ago." One evening Diogenes was sitting in the theatre, sadly contemplating a feminine hat as big as a poultry yard, which it very much resembled. "I wish I had a club," he said, in his pathetic way. "I would like to hit that woman a good crack on—" He hesitated. "The thing she carries her brains in?" suggested his friend. "Ah, no," replied the cynic. "The thing she wears her hat on."

"A MISS is as good as a mile," but Mrs. is as good as a league.

A WOMAN refused to "shoo" her hens because her husband, a shoemaker, was on strike.

WHEN the young writer reads the reviews of his first work, he often finds it is a geyed book instead of a novel.

"LOVE is blind." True, true. The young man never sees the dog until it is too late to escape in a dignified manner.

"BLESSED be nothing; you can't lose it," as the tramp said, when he climbed over the garden wall, with the bulldog's nose where his (the tramp's) coat-tails ought to have been.

BREAD AND BOARD.—"This paper," says a German professor, "has discovered a way to make good, nutritious bread out of wood." "Pshaw! there's nothing curious about that." "Nothing curious? Why, just think of it—good, nourishing food from wood." "Certainly; the poorest kind of board, you know, contains bread."

IT WOULD BE SMELT.—Guest: "Let me have some smelt." Waiter: "We have no smelt. But we have salt fish fried." Guest: "I want smelt." Waiter: "Excuse me, sir. The salt fish fried will be smelt as much as anything you can get here."

HE SAW THE CAMEL.—"So you enjoyed your visit to the circus did you?" inquired young Sillabub of his adored one's little sister. "Oh, yes; and do you know we saw a camel there that screwed its mouth and eyes awfully, and sister said it looked exactly as you do when you are reciting poetry at your church festivals."

A TRUTHFUL MOUTH.—"I believe you. I know your mouth never utters a lie," replied Birdie McGinnis. "Thank you," said Miss Esmeralda Longcollin. "Do you know why your mouth never utters a lie?" asked Birdie. "No." "Because you talk through your nose." And now there is a coolness between the two.

A SCOTCH domine, after relating to his scholars the story of Amias and Sapphira, asked them "why God did not strike everybody dead who told a lie." After a long silence one little fellow got to his feet and exclaimed, "Because, sir, there wadna be onybody left."

AN ORIGINAL CHARACTER.

A JUSTICE of the Peace was trying a man for obtaining money under false pretences by making untruthful statements concerning a horse he had sold. A rather severe sentence was passed, and the prisoner said, "Judge, that sentence is unjust."

"That sentence won't be changed; not to any very great extent; not if the Court knows itself!" thundered the justice.

"But there was alleviating and extenuating circumstances in connection."

"Why didn't you state 'em before?"

"The Court didn't give me no chance."

"It is the opinion of the Court that the Court had something to do with this trial—please ante up yer fine here fore I sock five dollars onter you for contempt o' Court."

"But just let me explain. You know I told the man that the hoss was only six years old and wouldn't balk. Well, you see, it was the sor'l' hoss you traded me, and I took your word for all this."

"Hey! Was it the one I shoved onter yer last week?"

"That's what it was, Judge."

"And you didn't say nothing wuss than that he'd pull, and was a colt?"

"That's all, yer Honour."

"Well, this makes the case entirely different—circumstances alter cases. I don't see as you said any more than was necessary to unload the hoss. I'll remit the fine, and discharge you on yer own recognisance. Ef you and the jury 'll come out, you may ir'egate at the expense av the Court."—*American Paper.*

MISTRESS: "How is this, Baptiste? How can you allow the butcher to give you such a bad piece of beef? It is nothing but bone." Baptiste: "Just what I told the butcher, madam. I said if it was for myself I would not have it."

CUSTOMER: "Isn't it a trifle large, Levi?" Levi: "Larch, mine fren? S'h'elp gracious! ut you geeps dot shpring govt unt your vife sees it, your bosom vill set mit pride so dot she'll hef to set dem butt forwards."

"I WONDER what makes this chicken tough?" observed Fangle, at the dinner yesterday. "I'm sure it ought not to be," replied Mrs. Fangle, "for it is one of our Plymouth Rock pullets." "A Plymouth Rock pullet, is it? No wonder it's so hard; I've got my teeth through it."

MISS KRENE: "Why, Mr. Broadbang, has caused this change in your appearance?" Mr. B.: "I presume it's my glasses, don't you know? I've begun to wear them." Miss K.: "Well, you should always wear them. You have no idea how intelligent they make you look. I scarcely knew you."

"PAPA, when we enter heaven do we march through the pearly gates?" "Yes, my son." "And each gate is made of one big, solid pearl?" "Yes, my son." "Where do the oysters grow that contain such big pearls?" Papa (angrily): "Where's my whip, you young scamp?"

STRANGER (to country shopkeeper): "Can you tell me where I can find James Holt, who wrote this recommendation for Coffin's consumption cure? He lives here, I believe." Merchant: "He did before—." Stranger: "Before what?" Merchant: "Before he died of consumption."

SCENE—Scotch court-house. Sheriff: "Now, my good man, tell me the value of your dog—I mean what your dog was worth—that I may assess the damages." Old Farmer (speaking with great deliberation): "Weel, my lord, the dog wasna worth anything; but, jist for him shooting it I will mak' him pay the full value o't."

A CITIZEN stopped into a chemist's, and called for a couple of pills, which he swallowed. "How much?" he asked. "A shilling, sir." "A shilling! Why, the chemist down the street never charged me more than three-pence." "Then I'll make 'em twopence. I'll drive that man out of business if I have to sell goods at cost!"

"WHAT kept you so late last night, Archibald?" demanded Mrs. Spotsash. "Takin' inventory," replied Spotsash. "I knowed it!" she replied; "smelled it on your breath the minute you came in. You'll keep on takin' it till you get yourself in the look-up and disgrace your family, and then I hope you'll be satisfied."

SUMMER-RESORT hotels are putting on to adjectives and otherwise getting ready for the season. Mosenbaum, who keeps the "Boudoir," was taken to task for stretching his advertisement too much. "Hi, there, Mose!" said a friend, "I see you advertise that your rooms have been enlarged." "A dey haf." "But there have been no carpenter at work on your place." "No. Wait till tole you. I haf scraped der paper off der walls. See!"

"I've been digging over my garden," said Brown, "and I'm all worn out." "Ah!" remarked Fogg: "a new variety of earthen wear, eh?" Fenderson, who was present, thought it was a mighty good joke, and seeing Smith a short time afterwards, of course he had to tell it. "I say, Smith," said he, "Fogg just got off a neat thing. Brown was saying he was all worn out digging in his garden, and Fogg asked him if that wasn't a new kind of crockery ware. What do you think of that?" "I don't see the point." "Darned if I do either, now! But I thought I did when Fogg told it."

SOCIETY.

THE PRINCESS OF WALES and her three daughters were present on Saturday, May 29th, at the trooping of the colours on the Horse Guards' Parade, viewing the ceremony from a balcony in the Horse Guards' Tower. They afterwards accompanied the Prince and Princess to Putney, and the Prince gave a dinner in the evening—a good day's work.

PRINCE GEORGE OF WALES is credited with having carried out his duties, as representative of Her Majesty at the Duke of Braganza's wedding, in a highly satisfactory manner. He was made much of by all and at the review he passed down the line of troops with the King of Portugal. The same day his Royal Highness held a reception at the British Legation, when the Diplomatic Corps and a deputation of the English residents were presented to him.

THE rumoured engagement of Princess Louise of Wales to Prince Oscar of Sweden, says a contemporary, affords a fair example of how Royal marriages are made. The young people are practically strangers to each other; certainly neither has had the opportunity of testing the disposition of the other, and the affection that prompts a certain man to cleave to a certain woman is left out of the question altogether. This is not at all as it should be, but the rumour is not generally credited.

PRINCESS LOUISE, who perhaps entertains less than any member of the Royal Family, gave a garden-party recently at Kensington Palace, where she and her husband occupy some rooms, as do several other presumably needy couples. The Princess would possibly regard the obligations of her position differently but for her husband.

LADY THERESA BOYLE has given a charming dance at the Countess of Cottenham's residence at Queen's gate. Lady Cottenham was attired in black lace, much trimmed with jet; a white feather in the hair, and jet ornaments. Miss Boyle looked extremely well in white tulle, the skirt made with silk panels edged with pearls, the silk bodice being trimmed with pearl-spotted tulle; trails of narcissus were prettily arranged about the dress, and a few were fastened in the hair; she wore pearl ornaments, and held a bouquet of narcissus.

The Countess of Strathmore was in mauve broché, and Lady Constance Lyon wore pale blue tulle; the Countess of Lovelace wore pale pink satin draped with old point lace, the front of her dress being of pale flowered satin.

Princess Sultane Malcom wore pink satin; Viscountess Dalrymple white net and satin, trimmed with old gold lace; and Lady Goldsmid pale blue satin, with front of pink flowered brocade; diamond stars and pink flowers in the hair.

DOVER HOUSE, Whitehall, was very recently the scene of a very brilliant reception, which was given by the Countess of Dalhousie. Her ladyship looked splendid in a bodice and train of satin, in a delicate shade of peach, the front of the gown being of white satin.

The Duchess of Westminster's black dress was thickly threaded with gold; the Duchess of Bedford wore black, with a pale mauve feather in the hair, diamond tiara, and other ornaments; Lady Elia Russell was in pale blue satin, handsomely embroidered; the Countess of Seaford, navy velvet train lined with pink satin, over a petticoat of pink brocade, and splendid diamonds.

Madame de Staal, grey and pink flowered satin looped over a skirt of ruby velvet; the Countess Sondes, black; Lady Lily Milles, white satin; the Countess of Strathmore, grey broché velvet trimmed with steel; Lady Rossmore, white brocade and pearls; Viscountess Galway, pale grey brocade; the Countess of Lathom, golden brocade; Lady Wantage, black, trimmed with silver and beautiful diamonds; and Hon. Mrs. Balfour, navy blue velvet and satin.

STATISTICS.

NATIONAL DEBTS.—The prevailing opinion that the public debt of England is larger than the national debt of any other country is an erroneous one. At the end of the year 1885 the English debt was £740,000,000 (in round numbers). In 1883 the national debt in France, reckoned in English money, was £942,000,000, and is now about £1,200,000,000. In spite of the endeavours of the present French ministry to check the colonial "jingo" policy the public debt is still increasing.

CIRCUSES.—The largest circus in Paris accommodates only 7,000 people, while one in ancient Rome could hold over 150,000, where from 100 to 400 lions were let loose at a time. Augustus filled the arena once with 3,500 wild animals, and one Probus got up a free fight between 1,000 wild boars, 1,000 stags, 1,000 rams, and 1,000 ostriches, and the occupants of the upper galleries—the gods—had the right to shoot arrows and javelins into the *melée*.

GEMS.

LET a woman do what she can, not because she is a woman, but because she is one of God's creatures.

IDLENESS is the hotbed of temptation, the cradle of disease, the waster of time, the canker-worm of felicity.

EVERY man's life lies within the present, for the past is spent and done with, and the future is uncertain.

SIMPLICITY, of all things, is the hardest to be copied, and ease is only to be acquired with the greatest labour.

GOOD men have the fewest fears. He has but one who fears to do wrong. He has a thousand who has overcome that one.

THERE is a better than the great man who is always speaking, and that is the great man who only speaks when he has a great word to say.

As no single man is born with the right of controlling the opinions of all the rest, so the world has no title to demand the whole time of any particular person.

EVERY man must patiently bide his time. He must wait—not in listless idleness—but in constant, steady, cheerful endeavours, always willing and fulfilling and accomplishing his task, that, when the occasion comes, he may be equal to the occasion.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

COLD rice left over from one breakfast makes a very good dish for next morning, either in the form of rice balls patted up in the form of potato balls, or in omelets. A rice omelet should be made with two eggs to a cup of cold boiled rice, and care should be taken that it is served very hot.

CREAM PIE.—Three eggs, one cup sugar, one teaspoonful cream tartar, one cup flower, one-half teaspoonful soda, two tablespoonfuls milk, one-half tablespoonful lemon flavouring; beat the yolks of eggs with the sugar, dissolve soda in milk, stir cream tartar in flour, add whites beaten stiff last of all.

TO KEEP CUT FLOWERS FRESH.—In the evening lay them in a shallow pan or bowl with their stems in a very little water, and cover the receptacle with a damp towel, one just wrung out of water. In the morning the flowers can be arranged in vases for the day. The stems can be slightly cut from day to day. Flowers treated in this manner can be kept from one to two weeks and sometimes even longer.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

M. C. H.—Do not trust him.

GRACE F.—The elder lover is preferable.

ROSELLEN.—The matter cannot be discussed in these pages.

P. D. R.—The eyebrows cannot be rendered heavier by any artificial means.

E. R.—You should apply for copying to any lawyers about whom you know anything.

H. L. M.—The words, "No presents," should be engraved on the lower left-hand corner of the card of invitation.

K. N. O.—There is no probability of knee-breeches coming into fashion this year unless on special occasions.

C. C. F.—*A rivoleri* (Italian) means "Alieu until we meet again." *Braco* (Italian) signifies "Well done."

GRACE.—A gentleman has no reason to feel offended because the lady to whom he has offered his services as escort politely refuses the honour.

PANSY.—1. Your writing indicates firmness and neatness. 2. Golden, Auburn, and dark brown. It is a pure matter of taste. 3. About nineteen. 4. Exercise it as much as possible.

C. C. L.—"*Prunus*" means literally "a plum." *Prunus* is the botanical name of the genus of the great family of the *Rosaceae*, containing the plum, almond and peach.

EDWARD.—A slight bow is all that courtesy requires after an introduction. Shaking hands is optional, and if a cold rest with the elder or the superior in social standing to make the advances.

H. H. M.—Do not entertain any feeling of respect, let alone admiration, for a man who flirts with every lady he meets. His actions plainly show that he is using you as a mere plaything.

W. M. Y.—If you have money deposited in a bank in a town of which you are a resident, the cashier will furnish you with a draft that will be payable in London; if not, enlist the services of a friend having an account in some metropolitan bank.

BEST MAN.—The best man has to see that the bridegroom is in his place, that the clergyman's fees, &c., are paid, and that the bridegroom has the ring. He escorts the chief bridesmaid from the church, and at the breakfast returns thanks for the bridesmaids.

LISIE.—Powder applied to the skin gradually closes the pores, and by thus clogging up nature's drainage-tubes causes the skin to assume in many cases a yellowish, parchment-like hue, while in others pimples and blotches make their appearance.

F. R.—A highly recommended fackle-remover is compounded by mixing together 1 ounce of lemon-juice, 4 drachm of powdered borax, and 4 drachm of white sugar. It should be kept for a few days in a bottle, and then applied morning and night.

C. W. B.—We are unable to solve the knotty problem propounded by you: "What is the cause of some children growing to be so much taller than their parents?" It is doubtless one of the inscrutable laws of nature that will never be satisfactorily settled by human minds.

F. C. B.—Handwriting cannot be taken as a certain index of character, but in many cases there are peculiar personal characteristics which show themselves very plainly in the penmanship. In yours the indications are of a quick, nervous disposition. 2. A look of light-brown hair of very delicate texture.

PHILOMELA.—1. Plenty of vigorous exercise and plain, temperate living. 2. Leave them alone. 3. Try lemon juice or glycerine applied night and morning, and keep the hands always covered. 4. King Edward I. created his eldest son Prince of Wales when he entered Camerton, and since then the Sovereign's eldest son has always borne the title. 5. Very good.

L. T. W.—Night is that part of the natural day between the time the sun sinks below the horizon and the time of his rising—in other words, the time elapsing between sunset and sunrise. The popular meaning of morning is the time between dawn and the beginning of the forenoon, but in an astronomical day it begins at twelve o'clock midnight and ends at twelve o'clock noon.

S. N. L.—Harsh is a term sometimes applied to the mischievous and often injurious tricks which are played by the older undergraduates in colleges upon students who have just entered. The term, as well as the practice, is of considerable age; but during the last few years much effort has been put forth by the officers of such institutions of learning to suppress the custom as demoralising and barbarous.

G. D. D.—When a man has been gone over "seven years beyond seas," as the law phrases put it, without any tidings whatever having been had of him, though he is not looked upon as dead, and though his wife cannot lawfully marry again, she cannot be prosecuted for bigamy should he afterwards return. The wife's second marriage will be considered illegal, even if she and he both wish to have it annulled or set aside, the court having power to do so on a proper application being made to it. A woman who marries a second time under the circumstances in which your niece is placed is not in any way punishable by law.

NEW READER.—There are several excellent treatises on water-colour painting, obtainable of any artist's colourman. In all of them will be found explicit directions concerning the mixing and blending of the colours, the preparation of the paper and many other important points, the enumeration and description of which would require at least a column of this journal.

S. C. J.—Under the circumstances, there would be no impropriety in inviting the gentleman to call again. It is not proper, however, to make the acquaintance of a gentleman in such an off-handed manner as that described—flirting with him in the street, and then allowing him to escort you home. The majority of men have but little respect for a lady with whom an acquaintance can be so easily made.

ELLA.—Unless on intimate terms with her gentleman visitor, the lady is not supposed to accompany him to the door, the leave-taking generally occurring in the parlour. Still, this rule is not strictly observed, excepting on extraordinary occasions, as evening receptions and the like, and consequently no actual breach of etiquette would be committed should she fail to obey the letter of the law.

G. W. S.—We certainly have no such vehement feelings on the subject as you express. We believe in letting people exercise their own taste and judgment in such matters, and have no disposition to interfere with them. When you build your own country villa, you will probably have it constructed in such a manner, and painted with such colours as will suit yourself, as you will have an unquestionable right to do.

THE TREASURE.

There is a treasure you must find

If you would happy be;

'Tis richer than was ever mined,

Or dived for in the sea;

Like other good, it must be sought,

And, unlike other things,

It is not bargained for and bought

With golden offerings.

Oh, it is nobler far than gems,

O'er which the miser bows,

Or Mammon's hoard or diadems

That burden royal brows.

But few will see it who devote

Their days to storing self;

Who think of naught but to promote

Aggrandisement of self!

Yet be this treasure found who gives

His better nature play;

Who gathers, in the life he lives,

The blossoms by the way,

And in his manly bosom feels

Love's sweet emotions rise,

And bids them stay till time reveals

The blissful mysteries.

Oh, happy man! since he has found

Of all earth's boons the best,

A life to which his own is bound

By ties the tenderest;

For all their joys love is the key;

They have no cares apart;

She knows his sturdy constancy,

And he her faithful heart!

D. B. W.

L. S. S.—A learner's outfit—consisting of battery, key, sounder, book of instruction, wire and chemicals—may be purchased from a dealer in telegraphic instruments. With constant practice one may master the rudiments of telegraphy by using one of these instruments, but not so easily or thoroughly as when taught by a person having a practical knowledge of the various technicalities of the profession.

W. D. R.—Indigestion, giddiness, headache, mental depression, &c., are often the effects of continuous over-eating. Drugs will ordinarily afford relief, but the omission for a week or two of one or two meals a day will allow the system to recover itself, and will rid the patient of the disorders named. The frequent employment of drugs weakens the stomach. Unless absolutely necessary, do not use them.

R. S. D.—A quick cure for earache is the following: Take a small piece of cotton batting or cotton wool; make a depression in the centre with the finger, and fill the indentation with as much black pepper as will cover a sixpence; then gather it into a ball and tie it up; dip the ball into sweet oil, and insert it in the ear, covering the latter with cotton wool, and using a bandage to keep it in its place.

H. W. F.—The first step in polishing a gun-stock is to scrape and sand-paper it; then, with a piece of fine pumicestone and water pass regularly over the work with the grain until the rising of the latter is down, after which, with powder made of tripoli and boiled linseed-oil, applied with a rubber made of a piece of old felt, polish the piece to a bright face. This will be a very superior polish, but it requires considerable time and experience.

T. M. T.—Judged from your description, the man is a scoundrel of the worst kind, and you should carefully guard yourself from his wiles. It was not only foolish but extremely rash to allow him to enter your home after so grossly insulting you upon your first meeting. Forbid him the privilege of again visiting you; and should he persist in his purpose, place the matter in the hands of your father or brothers, who will doubtless teach him a lesson well he deserves upon both his mind and body.

S. D. F.—Were we to furnish business addresses to all those desiring them, our answers would become simply a medium for the free advertisement of col-dealers, brokers, produce and commission merchants, &c. Desiring to retain the space allotted to the answers to correspondents for material of more moment and greater general interest, such requests are always refused, and the questioners advised to consult the advertising columns of daily and weekly newspapers and the numerous magazines published at the present day.

A. M. M.—The best known composer of music now living is Verdi. He is in Italy. Rubinstein, although better known for instrumental music, has written several operas. He is a Russian, and lives in St. Petersburg. Gounod was living in Paris lately. Liszt is the greatest living musician, but his vocal music is quite overshadowed by his music for the piano and orchestra. Sir Arthur Sullivan lives in England. There is, besides, a host of writers of operas of varying degrees of merit, such as Goldmark and Debussy. They can be addressed through the publishers of music.

G. R.—It is truly amusing to all sober-thinking persons to read such a question as, "Can a girl of sixteen summers carry on an engagement, without impropriety, with a gentleman of nearly eighteen years?" Without exaggeration it can be denominated "love in long clothes," as neither one of the subjects has the faintest idea of the true meaning of an engagement to marry, or can define the responsibilities to be assumed when once they have become wedded. Let your minds dwell upon some other subject of greater importance, and wait until nature has furnished you with more common sense to understand thoroughly what is required of lovers.

C. M.—To crystallise flowers construct or procure some basket made of pliable copper wire into fanciful forms, and wrap them with gauze. Into these tie at the bottom, violets, ferns, grass-like leaves—in short, any flowers except full-blown roses, and sink them into a solution of alum (one pound of the alum to one gallon of warm water), after the solution has cooled. The colours will then be preserved in their original beauty, and the crystallised alum will hold faster than when from a hot solution. When you have a light covering of crystals that completely covers the articles, remove the basket carefully, and allow it to drip for twelve hours.

D. M. P.—Musical scholars of the present day seem to agree that the national song of France, "*La Marseillaise*," was not composed by Rouget de l'Isle, but was copied by him from the *credo* of the fourth mass of Holzmün, of Mureberg, who composed it in 1770; and it was first sung in Strasbourg, in the hotel of M. de Montesson, in 1782. Rouget de l'Isle produced it in 1792. He was an officer, then stationed at Strasbourg. In Paris it was sung for the first time by the band of men who were brought from Marseilles by Barbaroux to aid in the revolution of Aug. 10, 1792; hence its name of "*Le chant des Marseillais*," and afterwards "*La Marseillaise*."

A. W. T.—In making an artificial pond, where the earth is of that nature that it will not hold water, it is necessary to take an equal quantity of gravel, sand, and clay; let these be spread over the proposed pond, and tempered with water, cutting the materials with a spade, and treading it well with the feet, in two courses or layers, each eight inches in thickness. After this is done cover the whole surface with dry soil, four inches in thickness. The pool, after this process, will be perfectly retentive, and the water may be turned into it as soon as it is completed. On the opposite side of the pool to where the water flows in should be made a sort of waste weir with a few bricks level with the surface; water in the pool, to take away the overflow, and prevent the water from becoming stagnant.

H. W. S.—1. A pure soap which is peculiarly adapted for softening the skin is made as follows:—Take a quarter of a pound of castile soap—the older the better—slice it down into a pewter jar, and pour upon it two quarts of alcohol. Place the jar in a vessel of water at such a heat as will cause the spirits to boil, when the soap will soon dissolve. Then put the jar, closely covered, in a warm place until the liquor is clarified; take off any scum that may appear on the surface, and pour it carefully from the dregs; then put it into the jar again, and place it in the vessel of hot water—distilling all the spirit that will arise; dry the remaining mass in the open air for a few days, when a white translucent soap will be obtained, free from all alkaline impurities, and perfectly void of smell. A more excellent toilet soap cannot be manufactured. 2. Your penmanship is very neat.

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London: Published for the Proprietor, at 334, Strand, by J. R. Speck; and Printed by WOODFALL and KINNEA, Milford Lane, Strand.

